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**Mayor de Blasio, Manhattan District Attorney Vance,
NYCHA Chair Russ and Union Settlement Re-Open
Newly Renovated Washington Houses Community Center**

*Manhattan DA's funding helps create a new state-of-the-art
facility for the East Harlem community*

Mayor Bill de Blasio, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., NYCHA Chair Gregory Russ and Union Settlement today announced the formal re-opening of the newly refurbished Washington Houses Community Center in East Harlem. The 11,000 square foot building has been completely updated and redesigned to become a fresh, bright, and welcoming space for the community.

Union Settlement (www.unionsettlement.org), the oldest and largest social service organization in East Harlem, utilizes the Washington Houses Community Center to offer a wide variety of programs for youth and seniors in the community. Union Settlement has occupied the center since it was constructed in the 1950s, and this is the first major renovation of the building in over half a century.

The renovations were made possible thanks to a grant of over \$2 million through the Manhattan DA's Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII), which seeks to enhance fairness in the city's justice system in a variety of ways, including by investing available funding in community-based programs to help youth avoid involvement into criminal justice system. In addition to this capital funding, in 2017 Union Settlement received multi-year funding to oversee the East Harlem Youth Opportunity Hub, through which youth-serving organizations from across the neighborhood work collaboratively to offer enriching programs and services to East Harlem's youth and young adults.

“When we invest in youth, we build stronger generations of New Yorkers and help make the safest big city in America even safer,” said **District Attorney Vance**. “That’s why my Office’s Criminal Justice Investment Initiative created Youth Opportunity Hubs across Manhattan: to provide safe spaces with inviting, supportive, and enriching alternatives for young people. I am proud to fund the full renovation of the Washington Houses Community Center, giving the young people of East Harlem a comfortable, safe space to engage their bodies and minds for many years to come. My thanks to Union Settlement for their ongoing leadership and dedication to a thriving East Harlem.”

“The refurbished space at Washington Houses will provide East Harlem residents – youth and adults alike – with a welcoming and safe place to come together as a community. I’d like to thank the Manhattan

District Attorney, Union Settlement, NYCHA and all of our partners for their commitment to this project,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“NYCHA’s community centers are an invaluable source of programming, resources and wraparound services and we depend on the continued support of public and non-profit partners to ensure that the needs of these facilities are commensurate with the needs of our residents,” said **Greg Russ, NYCHA Chair & CEO**. “We are grateful to the Mayor’s Office, District Attorney of New York and Union Settlement for working with us to renovate the Washington Houses Community Center and look forward to seeing this exciting new space be utilized by members of the public for many years to come.”

“Union Settlement is thrilled to see the Washington Houses Community Center transformed into such an amazing space, and we are delighted to now welcome children, youth, adults and seniors back into this wonderful new space,” said **David Nocenti, Executive Director of Union Settlement**. “This is the center that the East Harlem community deserves, and I want to thank District Attorney Vance, Mayor de Blasio and NYCHA Chair Russ for making this happen.”

The 18-month renovation, which was led by Andrew Franz Architects and SPK Lewis Construction, involved a complete gut renovation of the Washington Houses Community Center to include a new entryway and skylight, new floors and lighting, a new computer lab and art studio, and a variety of other new program spaces and offices.

“This new center benefits the community in so many ways: New and larger glass expanses and glazed entrances on the center’s exterior encourage more access and participation. Its naturally illuminated interior with open views throughout and a central skylight create a positive environment with opportunities for interaction of Union Settlement’s different constituencies,” said **Andrew Franz, AIA**. “It’s our hope that with this extensive renovation, and the wonderfully integrated installations by East Harlem artists, it will continue to be a source of pride and inspiration for the youth and seniors it serves, long into the future.”

“SPK/Lewis Construction is appreciative and proud of having been awarded the opportunity to work with the Union Settlement team to renovate the Washington Houses Community Center, said **Brian Flaherty, CEO of SPK/Lewis Construction**. “The newly renovated Community Center is a bright and welcoming environment that will be enjoyed by the community for years to come.”

"Union Settlement's Washington Houses Community Center is a pillar of East Harlem, providing enrichment and services to the community, young and old," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I thank District Attorney Cy Vance for his investment into this community center, which will give young people and people of all ages a beautiful place to go and a positive environment in which to flourish."

“I am excited to see the Washington Community Center renovations complete with new flooring, lighting, a new computer lab, art studio, and so much more,” said **Council Member Diana Ayala**. “We understand the role neighborhood centers play in the mental health and success of our youth and seniors and this project demonstrates the importance we place on our community’s overall well-being. With this new and improved space, youth and seniors will now enjoy a state-of-the-art facility the East Harlem community rightfully deserves. I want to extend my sincere gratitude in today’s re-opening to District Attorney Vance, Mayor Bill de Blasio, NYCHA Chair Russ, and Union Settlement for this beautifully transformed space.”

“I am very excited to celebrate the re-opening of the newly renovated Washington Houses Community Center in East Harlem,” said **State Senator Jose Serrano**. “This incredible modern community hub will be an amazing place for East Harlem residents of all ages to enjoy for years to come. Many thanks to Union Settlement, District Attorney Vance, Mayor de Blasio and NYCHA Chair Russ for this state-of-the-art facility.

“The ribbon-cutting is a celebration of all the hard work that went into planning and executing the Washington Houses Community Center renovation and I am happy to be a part of it, said **Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez**. “The Center will benefit El Barrio for generations to come and serve as a safe and enjoyable space for our youth and seniors. Thank you to all our partners, especially Union Settlement, for your continued advocacy for the needs of East Harlem and the Manhattan DA’s Office for the generous funding. I’m excited for Washington Houses’ residents and look forward to the positive impact the Center will have on the community. ”

“Our Washington Community Center space has been a staple in the East Harlem community, and we are thrilled to create a new and improved space for our youth and senior participants to enjoy,” said **Lissa Southerland, Chief Operating Officer of Union Settlement**. “Union Settlement is always on the ground to ensure that our community has the very best services. The new Washington Community Center is a shining example of our continued stellar program quality in a beautiful space to call home.”

About Union Settlement

Union Settlement is an on-the-ground resource for East Harlem residents of all ages, and a passionate advocate for the needs of underserved communities. Established in 1895, Union Settlement provides a broad array of education, wellness and community-building programs to over 10,000 East Harlem residents each year, including early childhood education, afterschool and summer youth programs, college preparation, job readiness, English language classes, behavioral health counseling, small business assistance, senior centers, Meals on Wheels and more. For more information about Union Settlement, visit www.unionsettlement.org.