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GROUNDBREAKING FOR INSTITUTE OF PUERTO RICAN ARTS & CULTURE BRINGS DREAM OF SHOWCASE CULTURAL INSTITUTION CLOSER TO REALITY

*MARKS START OF TRANSFORMATION OF HISTORIC HUMBOLDT PARK STABLES
INTO EXHIBITION GALLERIES, PERFORMANCE SPACE & ARTS EDUCATION CLASSROOMS*

The Institute of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture (IPRAC) broke ground today on what will be the only institution in the nation dedicated to showcasing Puerto Rican arts and historic exhibitions year-round. Joined by elected officials as well as community, business, and education leaders, IPRAC took a major step toward realizing the dream of completing the eagerly anticipated and much needed cultural institution and community center.

IPRAC, a non-profit arts and educational institution devoted to the promotion, integration and advancement of Puerto Rican arts and culture will make its home in the historic Humboldt Park Stables in the heart of Chicago's Puerto Rican community.

"IPRAC will be the only self-standing cultural institution in the nation devoted to showcasing and preserving Puerto Rican arts and historic exhibitions year-round -- traditions that are today very much apparent in the cultural fabric of the United States." said U.S. Representative Luis V. Gutierrez. "The progress we celebrate today represents a successful local community effort of great national significance," Gutierrez said.

The 1896 Queen Anne-style building will be transformed into a 25,000-square-foot facility that will feature two contemporary exhibition spaces, a theater and performance space, classrooms for studio arts and workshops in creative arts, photography classroom with lab, curatorial department, café, museum store and a central courtyard for public and private events.

“IPRAC will offer a year-round program of traveling and permanent exhibitions, a lecture series, educational art workshops, a film series, and an annual fine arts and crafts festival.” said Clare Munana, Interim Executive Director of IPRAC. “We will also build a permanent collection of art by Puerto Rican Artists.”

The exhibition schedule for the first two years is under development, including an opening exhibition on the work of prominent Puerto Rican artists and how they actively engage audiences in their work through the use of multi-media and technology.

Working with Senator Miguel Del Valle and Representative Willie Delgado, Governor Rod Blagojevich awarded vital \$3.2 million in Illinois First funds from the state of Illinois.

“Thanks to the city and the state of Illinois, the Puerto Rican community has now taken responsibility for creating its own cultural institution.” said 26th Ward Alderman Billy Ocasio. “This is truly a step toward finalizing a dream, preserving a culture and sharing it with others from Chicago, throughout the U.S. and abroad.”

The Institute of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture has been bringing visual arts and exhibition programming and arts education workshops to the community since 2001.

“This was a community vision to create a one-of-a-kind institution, one that celebrates Puerto Rican identity and heritage by bringing to the community visual arts and exhibition programming that furthers the Puerto Rican arts and cultural tradition and brings it to all people” said Ray Vazquez, President, Board of Directors, IPRAC. “Today, I am proud to say that---this is no longer a vision, this is real.”

Besides bringing its much-needed resources directly into the community, IPRAC’s exhibitions and cultural programming will attract visitors and artists from across our country to Chicago and to beautiful and historically rich Humboldt Park neighborhood.

This increase in visitors will add even further momentum for the economic growth and cultural advancement in the Greater Humboldt Park area. This cultural attraction will give Chicago another cultural institution to promote and yet another reason for tourists to come to our city..

The Chicago Park District’s renovation of the exterior of the Humboldt Park Stables was completed in 1998. In 2003, IPRAC acquired a long-term lease from the Chicago Park District to occupy the Stables, complete the interior renovation and transform it into a major arts and cultural center.

IPRAC is in the midst of *Where Preservation Meets Inspiration*, a 3-year, \$6 million dollar capital development campaign to raise the funds needed to complete the interior renovation of the Humboldt Park Stables, make equipment and furniture purchases and finance start-up operating expenses.

Along with its board of directors, fundraising efforts are being led by a volunteer Campaign Leadership Committee comprised of community members, prominent business leaders and distinguished individuals who are dedicated to IPRAC.

“As Chairman of the Campaign Leadership Committee, I am honored to be part of this important project which represents our legacy to the City of Chicago” said Alberto Carrero, Jr., Senior Vice President of Banco Popular’s Public Banking Division and member of IPRAC’s board of Directors.

The project renovation project was designed by Macondo Architects & Planners along with CSA Group, the largest Hispanic engineering firm with headquarters in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The project developer and general contractor is Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation and Humboldt Construction Company.

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