

Development corporation changes name, looks to long-term role



File Photo

ALPHABET SOUP | The West Harlem Local Development Corporation (WHLDC) is now the West Harlem Development Corporation (WHDC)—a move that Executive Director Kofi Boateng says will actually make it easier for the organization to help the local community.

BY [CHRIS MEYER](#) / Spectator Senior Staff Writer
June 5, 1:24am

By dropping the word “local” from its title, the West Harlem Local Development Corporation is moving toward a longer-term role in the community.

The New York State Supreme Court approved a petition last month to transfer all assets of the WHLDC, which is responsible for distributing funds from Columbia to the neighborhood, to its successor entity, the West Harlem Development Corporation.

The procedural move will allow the development corporation, which was established as part of the 2009 Community Benefits Agreement in the wake of the University’s Manhattanville expansion, to take complete control of the \$83 million promised by Columbia.

It will also permit it to seek additional funding from third-party groups or philanthropic foundations—paving a way for the group to exist after the money from Columbia runs out.

WHDC executive director Kofi Boateng said he had been preparing for the transition since his first day on the job, in part by changing all of the corporation’s business cards and signs early. This led to some confusion, with many locals still calling it by its original name, Local Development Corporation.

But the change goes deeper than business cards—the development corporation will now be able to focus more heavily on specific projects that have long-term impacts for Harlem residents, Boateng said.

“Our approach has thus far been to go wide and give to as many organizations as possible,” he said, referring to the \$2 million in grants the organization [dished out to 83 local nonprofits](#) this spring. “By 2014, we are going to be more strategic in terms of lasting impact, which will also mean leveraging our resources to get outside of Columbia.”

The WHDC also reshaped its board, adding several new members including [City Council candidate Zead Ramadan](#), representatives for local politicians like Council member Robert Jackson and Rep. Charles Rangel, and Milton Tingling, a justice on the New York County Supreme Court.

Boateng said the new members would diversify the board and enable the WHDC to approach future problems in dynamic ways.

“We have Latinos in there, we have an Arab-American, we have women, we have people with different language skills,” Boateng said. “And all of those people give us a breadth of language and diversity when looking at problems.”

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