

2015-J952

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Pratt Center for Community Development on March 26, 2015

WHEREAS, From time to time this Legislative Body takes note of certain extraordinary institutions it wishes to recognize for their valued contributions to the success and progress of society and publicly acknowledge their endeavors which have enhanced the basic humanity among us all; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Pratt Center for Community Development to be celebrated with Community Development 360 Degrees on Thursday, March 26, 2015; and

WHEREAS, Community Development 360 Degrees is a series of three policy salons exploring the evolution of community development in New York City, and how the movement is confronting the many challenges and opportunities facing New York City today; and

WHEREAS, The Pratt Center for Community Development is the oldest university-based community planning organization in the nation; it combines urban planning, research, policy advocacy, and small business assistance to advance innovative solutions to low- and moderate-income communities' greatest economic and environmental challenges; and

WHEREAS, This vital New York City institution was founded in 1963, when graduate planning students and faculty at Pratt Institute partnered with community organizations to address urban poverty through empowering local residents to participate in the official planning processes that affected their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, During this time, the Pratt Center's work in central Brooklyn served as the model for Senator Robert F. Kennedy's project to create

Community Development Corporations and develop safe, stable housing and economic opportunities in New York City and other urban areas throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, The Pratt Center continued to build on this experience in the 1970s, as it fought successfully to ensure that federal community development assistance was invested in poor neighborhoods amidst the fiscal crisis; and

WHEREAS, At a time when residents of the South Bronx, Harlem, Central Brooklyn, and the Lower East Side faced a wave of disinvestment, the Pratt Center launched an architectural practice that worked with neighborhood housing groups to reclaim buildings, pioneering the conversion of abandoned tenement shells into safe and decent housing for residents; and

WHEREAS, In the 1980s, the Pratt Center expanded its community-driven architectural practice, providing technical assistance to rebuild and preserve affordable housing in low- and moderate-income communities; it also worked to secure public loans to rehabilitate abandoned City-owned buildings as mutual housing co-ops; and

WHEREAS, The Pratt Center became an invaluable resource to New York City's budding Environmental Justice movement in the 1990s, providing planning, architectural and other types of technical assistance to reform the unjust siting of solid waste facilities, and creating parks and open space in communities with New York's highest rates of asthma; and

WHEREAS, In addition, the Pratt Center helped develop Brownfield Cleanup Laws, and launched a comprehensive effort to decommission the environmentally destructive Sheridan Expressway; it also played a pivotal role in founding the New York Industrial Retention Network

(NYIRN), which worked to retain and grow quality manufacturing jobs throughout New York City; and

WHEREAS, In the 21st Century, the Pratt Center has successfully

advanced innovative policies to support sustainable communities while continuing to help local groups convert underutilized space into schools, neighborhood centers and much-needed green space; and WHEREAS, Furthermore, the Pratt Center has helped to expand affordable housing in areas undergoing rapid luxury development, and has successfully advocated for the implementation of New York City's Select Bus Service program to address socioeconomic disparities in commuter time and transportation access; and

WHEREAS, In 2011, the Pratt Center merged with NYIRN, incorporating manufacturing growth strategies and the Made In NYC brand into its overall work for better local economies; and

WHEREAS, After five decades of exemplary service, the Pratt Center continues to be an innovator and leader in the field of community development, as it helps to foster a more sustainable and equitable New York City; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that those organizations which enhance the quality of life in the community and have shown a long and sustained commitment to excellence, certainly have earned the recognition and applause of all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Pratt Center for Community Development; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Pratt Center for Community Development.