

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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May 11, 2012  
Start: 10:10 a.m.  
Recess: 1:35 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway  
Committee Room, 16th Floor

B E F O R E:

DIANA REYNA  
JAMES G. VAN BRAMER  
Chairpersons

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Peter Koo  
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.  
Margaret Chin  
Mathieu Eugene  
Letitia James  
Elizabeth Crowley  
Leroy G. Comrie, Jr.  
Jessica S. Lappin  
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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Kate Levin  
Commissioner  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Zahra Amanpour  
Executive Director  
NYC Business Solutions  
New York City Department of Small Business Services

Eric Johnson  
Vice President  
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Naomi Hersson-Ringskog  
Executive Director  
No Longer Empty

Caron Atlas  
Co-Director  
NOCD-NY

Anusha Venkataraman  
Assistant Director  
El Puente Green Light District

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Tamara Greenfield  
Executive Director  
Fourth Arts Block

Betsy Imershein  
Member at Large  
NOCD-NY

Michael Hickey  
Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts

Cassandra Smith  
Senior Project Manager  
Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center

Maria Bauman  
Director of Education and Community Engagement  
Urban Bush Women

Kellie Terry-Sepulveda  
Executive Director  
Point Community Development Corporation

Verdery Roosevelt  
Director, Cultural Division  
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

Ryan Gilliam  
Downtown Art

David Strauss  
Director of External Affairs  
Queens Museum of Art

Sheila Lewandowski  
The Chocolate Factory

Melanie Franklin Cohn  
Executive Director  
Council on the Arts and Humanities for Staten Island

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lynda Herndon  
Queens Symphony Orchestra

Rasu Jilani  
Project Manager  
Pratt Center

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Good morning,  
I'd like to welcome everyone. My name is Diana Reyna, I am the Chair of the Small Business Committee, joint with Cultural Affairs, Council Member Chair with Jimmy Van Bramer. And we'd like to apologize, we have an overflow here, but we do understand that you will be able to hear everything in the other room, which is set up for everyone to be accommodated, and as people leave the main room, you will be welcomed in. We will be calling panels in groups of four or five and this hearing will begin as of this moment.

I'd like to welcome my colleague, Peter Koo, from Queens. I want to thank Commissioner Levin, Zahra Amanpour from the Small Business Solution Center, the Department of Small Business Services, Andrew Kimball, President of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, members of the organization Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts, who have really bridged a wonderful campaign in order to bring to light a lot of the matters that are so important and symbiotic to the small business community in reference to how the arts and culture are a real economic boom in the

1 city of New York.

2  
3 As many of you know, small  
4 businesses are the backbone of New York City's  
5 economy and account for almost two-thirds of the  
6 city's private sector jobs. The small business  
7 sector employs over 1.5 million people. Of  
8 approximately 215,000 small businesses in the city  
9 of New York, nearly 90% have 20 or fewer employees  
10 and over 60% have five or fewer employees. The  
11 importance of the small business sector to New  
12 York City's economy and job market cannot be  
13 overstated, that is why it is important for us to  
14 examine what we as government are doing to help  
15 create an environment where small businesses can  
16 thrive.

17 Today we will be discussing the  
18 cultural and creative sector and its importance to  
19 the New York City economy. We will also examine  
20 the issues and concerns of small businesses and  
21 entrepreneurs operating within the creative and  
22 cultural sector, and ways in which New York City's  
23 cultural assets can be leveraged to create  
24 opportunities for small businesses and  
25 entrepreneurs, and it is my understanding and I

1 have seen and witnessed the organic ways in which  
2 this is already happening. New York City's  
3 cultural institutions--museums, theaters, music,  
4 and performance venues--are of world class  
5 caliber, they not only attract millions of  
6 tourists to the city each year, but also provide  
7 economic opportunity for approximately 300,000  
8 people who work in this sector and its related  
9 businesses. This creative core does not only  
10 include well-known cultural institutions and  
11 Broadway theaters, it also includes nonprofit arts  
12 organizations, as well as for-profit creative  
13 companies, such as firms in the advertising,  
14 publishing, design, music, visual arts, performing  
15 arts industries, film, and television.

17 Together, this sector accounts for  
18 hundreds of thousands of jobs, approximately 20  
19 billion in economic activity, and approximately  
20 900 million in tax revenue. These small  
21 businesses choose New York City because of our  
22 unmatched pool of talent, concentration of  
23 resources, diversity of opportunity, educational  
24 and training institutions, and generous  
25 philanthropic community that is historically

1                   CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, INT'L INTERGROUP RELATIONS                   8  
2           supportive of cultural and artistic endeavors.

3                               While New York City presents  
4           unrivaled opportunity to firms in this sector,  
5           there remain a number of challenges that are  
6           shared by small businesses and entrepreneurs  
7           operating in the cultural and creative sector.  
8           These challenges include finding affordable and  
9           appropriate work space, gaining access to markets,  
10          the common lack of business skills and knowledge  
11          among cultural small businesses, and the impact of  
12          changes in technology.

13                              Today we will also be discussing  
14          naturally occurring cultural districts and how  
15          they can be further developed to support and  
16          nurture already existing neighborhood cultural  
17          assets that represent the needs and goals of the  
18          local community. We will be hearing from  
19          representative from New York City's agencies about  
20          the work they are doing to leverage the city's  
21          cultural and creative sectors to create  
22          opportunities for small businesses in the cultural  
23          sector and how they can certainly explore new  
24          ideas in partnership, as well as from the local  
25          business groups, arts groups, including those

1 involved in the Naturally Occurring Cultural  
2 District New York Working Group, to discuss their  
3 important work.  
4

5 Thank you to all of the BIDs that  
6 are participating here today, thank you to all who  
7 have come, my colleagues. And at this time, I'd  
8 like to invite Council Member Van Bramer to  
9 deliver his opening statement.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
11 very much, Chairwoman Reyna, and thank you for  
12 caring so much about this issue and urging this  
13 hearing today. And I want to thank Commissioner  
14 Levin for being here, and I know she has to leave  
15 a little bit early to attend to a very important  
16 personal matter, so we have a limited amount of  
17 time with the commissioner, but this is a very,  
18 very important hearing and a very important issue  
19 for me and for all of us.

20 As we all know, the cultural  
21 community in New York City fosters economic  
22 vitality by generating billions of dollars in  
23 revenue for the city, providing thousands of jobs  
24 in diverse enterprises and promoting cultural  
25 tourism. Many other businesses, such as hotels,

1 restaurants, retail stores, transportation  
2 services, among others, benefit from the patronage  
3 of arts motivated visitors from the New York  
4 Metropolitan area, across the nation, and abroad.  
5 Moreover, the city's cultural community also  
6 contributes to neighborhood revitalization and  
7 enriches the quality of life of those who live,  
8 work, or visit the city which are invaluable  
9 assets. And yet, despite the cultural and  
10 economic contributions of the arts and culture to  
11 the city, the creative sector, particularly  
12 cultural nonprofits and artists, face a myriad of  
13 challenges, including the high cost of appropriate  
14 work space, overcoming market forces, affordable  
15 housing, and facing economic insecurity that  
16 sometimes flows from the nature of their work.

17  
18 We hope to explore ways in which  
19 the cultural sector can gain access to additional  
20 supports that allow the arts and these NOCD--oh, I  
21 already read your testimony, Commissioner, so I  
22 understand that, unfortunately, they're not  
23 pronounced that way, but I thought NOCDs sounded  
24 more like a rapper.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And that,  
3 like, you could work with that, you know what I  
4 mean? But I've already gone ahead and read the  
5 Commissioner's testimony, apparently that's not  
6 how it's pronounced.

7 KATE LEVIN: Well we call them  
8 nakeds.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah,  
10 nakeds.

11 KATE LEVIN: Right.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Which is  
13 pretty interesting in and of itself really, but we  
14 won't really pursue that any further.

15 I did want to say, and this is a  
16 shameless plug for my district, but today LIC Arts  
17 Open begins with a terrific party, and this is an  
18 amazing, amazing festival that's occurring in Long  
19 Island City and it happened for the first time  
20 last year and I was proud to help lead the fight  
21 to make it happen, but some terrific artists and  
22 institutions have now developed this thing into a  
23 10-day super event where all over Long Island City  
24 events are happening. It's so many different  
25 venues with so many different artists and

1 galleries and institutions showing work and  
2 exhibiting, concluding in open studios on the  
3 20th. And this is a perfect example of what can  
4 happen and what has happened and we need to push  
5 this along even further, not only in Long Island  
6 City, but in other places. But the fact that we  
7 have a brochure this thick with all of these  
8 events going on in Long Island City and imagine  
9 all the people who are going to come to Long  
10 Island City, all the people that are going to shop  
11 in Long Island City, who are going to spend money,  
12 who are going to buy art as a result of all of  
13 this, that is very, very exciting. And I'm going  
14 to be going to a lot of parties in the next ten  
15 days, including--

17 KATE LEVIN: [Interposing]

18 Exploratory.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, no,  
20 that's a very important piece of my work to see it  
21 all, including tonight and then tomorrow is the  
22 big opening party, tonight's the pre-opening party  
23 'cause artists don't just have opening parties,  
24 they have pre-opening opening parties, so we have  
25 a lot of things to go to and it's very, very

1 exciting so I'm thrilled to be here.

2  
3 And I want to recognize that we  
4 have been joined by our amazing Finance chair from  
5 Brooklyn, Domenic Recchia, who is here and I know  
6 who cares a lot about this issue.

7 So I know we have a limited time  
8 with the commissioner, unfortunately, so I want to  
9 turn this over to her and welcome Commissioner  
10 Kate Levin.

11 KATE LEVIN: Thank you so much.  
12 I'm Kate Levin, Commissioner of the New York City  
13 Department of Cultural Affairs, and I'm here today  
14 to testify with regard to New York City's cultural  
15 sector and derivative small business. I am joined  
16 by my colleagues Zahra Amanpour, Executive  
17 Director of the Small Business Services Business  
18 Solutions Program and Eric Johnson from the  
19 Economic Development Corporation's Center for  
20 Economic Transformation. And I'm also joined by  
21 Deputy Commissioner Margaret Morton, who is  
22 prepared to answer questions if I have to depart  
23 before we've completed that portion of the  
24 hearing.

25 Culture is critical to New York

1 City's quality of life and identity as an  
2 international arts capital. It's also an economic  
3 driver, present in every neighborhood in all five  
4 boroughs. Through the Department of Cultural  
5 Affairs, the city supports 900 nonprofit cultural  
6 organizations each year and I'll highlight the  
7 role they play as businesses. I will also outline  
8 services DCA and other agencies provide to  
9 strengthen arts groups and maximize their impact  
10 on the communities they serve.  
11

12 New York City's Department of Small  
13 Business Services defines a small business as  
14 having fewer than 125 employees. Almost all of  
15 New York City's 1,200 nonprofit cultural  
16 organizations fall within this category.  
17 Statistics from the Cultural Data Project indicate  
18 that the median staff size of these 1,200  
19 institutions is six employees. For organizations  
20 with budgets of less than \$250,000, which is half  
21 of our applicant and grantee pools, the median  
22 staff size is three. It's worth noting that a  
23 closer look at this employment data foregrounds  
24 the unique hiring patterns at cultural  
25 institutions in which employment can include full-

1  
2 time and part-time staff members, as well as  
3 volunteers, independent contractors, and vendors.

4           The majority of cultural  
5 organizations may be small businesses, but their  
6 significance as employers may not be accurately  
7 captured due to these staffing patterns. For  
8 example, the Department of Labor only measures  
9 employees who work for wages at a single place of  
10 business. By excluding teaching artists,  
11 independent contractors, and vendors that may be  
12 employed at multiple cultural organizations,  
13 national measurements will overlook the full  
14 impact of arts employment.

15           To give some sense of this reach,  
16 in fiscal 2010 members of the Cultural  
17 Institutions Group spent \$275 million on over  
18 9,900 vendors, including caterers, dry cleaners,  
19 plumbers, costume suppliers, and marketing, and  
20 communications services across the five boroughs.  
21 The range of services purchased highlights the  
22 extent to which arts and culture is a critical  
23 part of our entire economy.

24           One of the most profound, if hard  
25 to measure, impacts of cultural organizations is

1 manifested in their transformational nature. Like  
2 Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, or  
3 NORCs, we have made it a priority to support  
4 Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts, which we  
5 call NOCDs. These organic concentrations of  
6 cultural organizations have a collective impact  
7 that not only stimulates and supports a range of  
8 other businesses, but also provides significant  
9 value in terms of local identity. Here are some  
10 examples of recent targeted investments: The  
11 Fourth Arts Block, or FAB, is an alliance of arts  
12 organizations and businesses on East Fourth Street  
13 in the East Village. In 2005, the City  
14 transferred six buildings on the block to eight  
15 cultural organizations, for a dollar each.  
16 Currently, we're investing more than \$19 million  
17 in capital improvements throughout the district.  
18 Since then, the cultural district has grown to  
19 include over 17 arts organizations which attract  
20 an annual audience of 2,000 people and serves over  
21 1,200 artists.

22  
23 The Downtown Brooklyn Cultural  
24 District consists of more than 40 arts  
25 organizations that attract half a million

1 visitors. The City has invested over \$200 million  
2 in support of capital projects in the area,  
3 including the 80 Arts Building--excuse me--which  
4 houses the Museum of Contemporary African  
5 Diasporan Arts, Evidence Dance Company, and Story  
6 Corps, among others; the Irondale Center; a new  
7 home for BRIG Arts Media Brooklyn and UrbanGlass  
8 in the Strand Theater; and the Brooklyn Academy of  
9 Music's soon to open Fisher Theater.  
10

11 In Long Island City, we've invested  
12 nearly \$80 million for a wide range of capital  
13 enhancement projects at several cultural  
14 institutions, including the Noguchi Museum,  
15 Sculpture Center, MoMA PS1 and the Chocolate  
16 Factory.

17 In 2007, DCA participated in the  
18 rezoning of 125th Street, including a bonus to  
19 incentivize commercial developers to partner with  
20 arts organizations. We continue to work with the  
21 Economic Development Corporation and the Upper  
22 Manhattan Empowerment Zone to develop Mart125, a  
23 mixed-use facility on 125th Street. The center  
24 will include a new 10,000 square foot facility for  
25 the National Jazz Museum in Harlem and other arts

1 groups, as well as ground floor retail space for  
2 local businesses.

3  
4 While trolleys have proven to have  
5 mixed benefits to cultural organizations, two such  
6 initiatives have been extremely successful. Led  
7 by the Bronx Council on the Arts, the Bronx  
8 Culture Trolley funded by the Department of  
9 Cultural Affairs, encourages arts participation in  
10 the South Bronx every Wednesday, and the Heart of  
11 Brooklyn trolley makes stops at the Brooklyn  
12 Museum, Prospect Park, Grand Army Plaza, and other  
13 landmarks in Prospect Heights.

14 The Metropolitan Transit Authority  
15 and DCA have provided marketing and funding  
16 support for the Queens Art Express, an annual  
17 program of the Queens Council on the Arts that  
18 invites riders to take the number 7 train and  
19 visit the 30 cultural organizations that have  
20 emerged along its route.

21 The Department of Cultural Affairs  
22 and its colleague agencies have created a number  
23 of programs to support the creative workforce.  
24 For example, the Department of Small Businesses  
25 Services provides oversight for the city's 67

1 Business Improvement Districts, or BIDs, which aim  
2 to improve neighborhoods. Cultural nonprofits  
3 have been terrific partners for a number of these  
4 BIDs. For example, the Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn  
5 Partnerships and Fulton Business Alliance have  
6 both worked with artists and arts organizations to  
7 revitalize Fort Greene. DCA and our colleagues at  
8 SBS recognize that BID membership fees can be  
9 costly for cultural nonprofits, and we're working  
10 together to promote arts organizations as vital  
11 partners for BID initiatives.  
12

13 At the same time, we're always  
14 seeking ways to help artists and administrators  
15 improve their personal financial planning skills  
16 in order to function as successful businesses of  
17 their own. In 2009, in the midst of the financial  
18 crisis, our agency started the Art of Money  
19 seminar series in collaboration with the  
20 Department of Consumer Affairs to link these  
21 workers with technical assistance organizations  
22 and financial training. Past sessions were held  
23 in Harlem, Long Island City, and Bedford  
24 Stuyvesant. All together, more than 300  
25 participants received information on accessing and

1 using credit, reducing existing debt, and planning  
2 for irregular income streams through this program,  
3 which we hope to continue in the next fiscal year.

4 Also in 2009, Mayor Bloomberg  
5 launched a series of initiatives to strengthen the  
6 city's nonprofits, including a Bridge Loan Fund to  
7 assist organizations during the challenging credit  
8 market. As part of that program we recently  
9 launched a partnership with Essensa, a group  
10 purchasing organization that leverages the buying  
11 power of nonprofits as an incentive to vendors to  
12 offer below market rates. Participating  
13 nonprofits can take advantage of office supplies,  
14 health insurance providers, and food service  
15 vendors, among other resources. DCA and Essensa  
16 hosted five informational sessions for arts  
17 organizations at venues around the city to  
18 highlight the potential impact on their bottom  
19 line. To date, 164 nonprofit organizations have  
20 signed up for Essensa accounts, including 61  
21 cultural nonprofits.

22 Marketing is essential to promote  
23 cultural programs and attract audiences, but it is  
24 often very expensive. DCA and the city's tourism  
25

1 and marketing organization, NYC & Company, have  
2 partnered to feature thousands of events from  
3 hundreds of cultural organizations on our online  
4 cultural calendars. Events are also shared with  
5 NYC.gov and the City's 311 call centers. In  
6 addition to helping visitors and residents take  
7 full advantage of New York City's cultural  
8 offerings, our goal remains to offer a free  
9 marketing resource to cultural groups seeking to  
10 build audiences. We urge all of your cultural  
11 constituents to contribute to the calendar at  
12 [nyc.gov/nyculture](http://nyc.gov/nyculture).  
13

14 Through Materials for the Arts, DCA  
15 supports hundreds of cultural organizations with  
16 budgets of under \$100,000 by providing free  
17 materials for their operations and programming  
18 needs. Thus far in fiscal 2012, 1,739 member  
19 organizations have received supplies, and we've  
20 conducted more than 5,400 transactions either in  
21 the warehouse or through MFTA's online direct  
22 donation service. In 2011, MFTA distributed over  
23 \$4 million worth of goods to its constituents from  
24 a wide range of donors, including design and  
25 technology firms, and the film and television

1 industries. This is just another example of how a  
2 wide array of businesses collaborate and support  
3 one another.  
4

5 In conclusion, cultural  
6 organizations are part of a robust small business  
7 sector that has widespread impact on the local  
8 communities and the city as a whole. I'd like to  
9 thank Chairman Van Bramer and Chairman Reyna for  
10 highlighting this topic. I do need to depart  
11 shortly, but my colleagues are here to answer any  
12 questions you may have.

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you so  
14 much, Commissioner. I just wanted to wish you  
15 well, I understand you have to leave.

16 And I wanted to just understand  
17 right now, as far as the--let me just get this  
18 right regarding what we're calling them--the  
19 NOCDs, we are interested in understanding whether  
20 or not you already bridge what would be a  
21 collaborative of different agencies to be able to  
22 create a council of leadership and speak to the  
23 different partners, as well as your sister  
24 agencies, such as SBS, DCA, EDC, DYCD, and others,  
25 to work through and plan improvements to continue

1           to strengthen arts, culture, creative  
2  
3           manufacturing, and essentially feeding what is the  
4           sustainable and vital community that we know is  
5           out there, but perhaps needs to be synthesized.  
6           And so sometimes in the perception would be that  
7           it's competing factions are not allowing growth  
8           and needs to have some intervention as far as  
9           leadership from government agency. And under your  
10          leadership, this is a great opportunity to be able  
11          to create such a council. Is that something that  
12          you already have?

13                           KATE LEVIN: We do not have a  
14          standing council of city agencies, the assumption  
15          is that organizations that are cultural in nature  
16          would come to us for assistance working with other  
17          city agencies if they are finding administrative  
18          impediments, and that is usually what tends to  
19          happen. One example of this is a group called the  
20          Bronx Quad, which consists of Montefiore, Fordham,  
21          the Wildlife Conservation Society, a/k/a Bronx  
22          Zoo, and the New York Botanic Garden, they started  
23          working together about four years ago on a series  
24          of neighborhood wide improvements that's resulted  
25          in a targeted DEP funding to deal with water

1 drainage issues. EDC has led a rezoning  
2 initiative that is designed to help stimulate  
3 entrepreneurship in the--and Webster Avenue in the  
4 areas--  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

7 KATE LEVIN: --surrounding that--

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

9 KATE LEVIN: --so we were sort of  
10 the point agency 'cause two of the four were  
11 cultural organizations--

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

13 KATE LEVIN: --but I'd like to  
14 think that we've worked pretty successfully--

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

16 KATE LEVIN: --in bringing the  
17 other necessary city resources.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right. And I  
19 can appreciate the effort that you do continue to  
20 participate in, it's almost driven by complaint,  
21 as opposed to a real collaborative bringing  
22 together where we can scope the different assets  
23 throughout the city of New York so that we're  
24 presenting more of a comprehensive approach, as  
25 opposed to reactive, and, you know, similar to

1 what is happening in Council Member Jimmy Van  
2 Bramer's district, the open art studios concept,  
3 that was something in Bushwick that had begun, the  
4 Bushwick open art studio, and now in its seventh  
5 year, I believe, we're talking about enormous  
6 efforts in trying to organize amongst themselves.  
7 Clearly, we've been helping, but it would have  
8 been wonderful to be able to see the collaboration  
9 with the city agencies together making sure that  
10 street permits were granted that--and there's no  
11 real vehicle to start planning a lot of this  
12 comprehensively so that, as the Long Island City  
13 and the Bushwick open studio continues to thrive  
14 and other boroughs continue to do the same thing,  
15 that we're really in advance assisting what would  
16 be all the necessary agencies to be able to not  
17 complain, but rather assist them in making sure  
18 that they achieve their goal.

20 KATE LEVIN: That's certainly our  
21 intent and, again, we--our colleague agencies  
22 assume that we are serving as this clearinghouse.  
23 If organizations aren't asking us for help, then  
24 we do get engaged at a moment--

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

2 KATE LEVIN: --when something's  
3 gone wrong--

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

5 KATE LEVIN: --and that's never  
6 nearly as pleasant as it could be. I mean, the--

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

8 KATE LEVIN: --Mayor's office has  
9 reconfigured its permitting agency so that it is  
10 able to issue blanket permits and troubleshoot a  
11 whole range of things that used to be done on an  
12 independent agency by agency basis and we work  
13 very closely with that unit all the time to try  
14 and, for example--

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

16 KATE LEVIN: --on the permitting  
17 issues, do that quickly and--

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

19 KATE LEVIN: --comprehensively.  
20 So, again, totally open to creating a more formal  
21 process, but, again, I would just encourage any  
22 cultural constituents to--

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]

24 To continue to--

25 KATE LEVIN: --to talk to us 'cause



1  
2 and Commissioner Rob Walsh and I talk about this a  
3 lot. In the development of Business Express, for  
4 example, we talked about the advantages of a  
5 nonprofit track. What has been explained to me  
6 and what I appreciate, and my colleagues should  
7 obviously speak for themselves, but part of the  
8 issue is that the funding DSBS receives and a lot  
9 of their mandate has to do with the taxable status  
10 of small businesses. You know, it's one of the  
11 double jeopardies that nonprofits often find  
12 themselves in because they don't pay taxes--

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

14 KATE LEVIN: --the funding streams  
15 that support programs that would benefit them are  
16 sometimes limited. I mean, you've seen this, for  
17 example, it's one of my frustrations, we haven't  
18 had to tap into it very often, but federal  
19 disaster relief programs often prioritize tax  
20 paying businesses as opposed to nonprofits, when  
21 in fact, nonprofits are often both the hardest hit  
22 and the most important to communities in trying to  
23 rebuild.

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Of course.

25 KATE LEVIN: So I know the

1 leadership of DSBS is totally open to this and--

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

3 KATE LEVIN: --we welcome the  
4 chance to do a better and more comprehensive job,  
5 we just may need to be a little strategic in  
6 figuring out how--

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Exactly.

8 KATE LEVIN: --to not penalize  
9 nonprofits for being nonprofit.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'm a huge fan  
11 of joint ventures and perhaps the language  
12 appropriate--

13 KATE LEVIN: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --so that we're  
15 not taking away from the tax benefit, but also  
16 complementing it by making sure that the joint  
17 venture recognizes two elements in the city that  
18 are providing a tax revenue to the City of New  
19 York. Thank you so much.

20 KATE LEVIN: Exactly. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I just  
22 have two very quick--

23 KATE LEVIN: Yep.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --

1            questions for you, Commissioner, I know you have  
2            to run. The first is I know you mentioned  
3            membership in BIDs being prohibitive costwise for  
4            some and I was wondering if you and SBS have  
5            talked about having a nonprofit cultural rate or  
6            discounting membership in BIDs to encourage more  
7            small in particular cultural organizations and  
8            even individual artists to get involved because we  
9            all think it's really important, obviously, that  
10           BIDs and merchants associations and such include  
11           the cultural community.  
12

13                            KATE LEVIN: There's a certain  
14           amount of self-determination that goes into BIDdom  
15           so we can advocate for including cultural  
16           organizations at a discounted rate, but  
17           ultimately, since most BID members are also small  
18           businesses themselves, you know, I can appreciate  
19           a lack of alacrity in allowing people to sign up  
20           for discounted rates. That said, we have made  
21           some inroads in working with BIDs to demonstrate  
22           the special value that involving cultural  
23           organizations really brings to what it is that  
24           they're trying to do. So the Myrtle Avenue folks  
25           brought arts organizations to do pop-up work in

1 vacant storefronts and that's the best  
2 advertisement really ultimately for allowing  
3 nonprofits to get involved. And then, you know,  
4 each BID has figured out individually how to allow  
5 for membership and/or participation. In some  
6 cases, I gather--and, again, I can sort of respect  
7 this--there is a disinclination to start down the  
8 road of discounted membership because then there  
9 are lots of other businesses that might claim  
10 hardship or other reasons for starting to erode  
11 the fundamental funding strategy for BIDs. So we  
12 have suggested the idea, but I think we want to be  
13 respectful of the financial undertaking that BIDs  
14 consist of in any case.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure, I  
17 mean, I'll follow up with SBS, but I think it can  
18 be done.

19 The other thing I wanted to ask you  
20 about is NYC & Company, which--and I realize  
21 you're not NYC & Company--but there are some  
22 people who think it should really be called  
23 Manhattan & Company, and I just want to, you know,  
24 say again, there are a lot of people for whom  
25 meaningful participation in NYC & Company, which

1 means sort of meaningful promotion from NYC &  
2 Company comes with a cost as well and that cost is  
3 prohibitive for a lot of our smaller cultural  
4 organizations and arts groups. And, you know, I  
5 mean, I certainly see it in Queens and I think  
6 there are other people who see it, we don't get  
7 enough and how do we break through there so that  
8 outer borough and smaller culturals, you know,  
9 even events like this feel like your NYC & Company  
10 represents everybody. And, you know, look,  
11 Manhattan is a very important place and there are  
12 a lot of really important institutions that draw a  
13 lot of people to our city, we all get that, but  
14 there's got to be more equity here. And part of  
15 it is fee-based, right? And then part of it is  
16 direction and how can DCA influence George and NYC  
17 & Company, as I know you're on the board, get this  
18 to a situation where people are not feeling,  
19 really, neglected and, really, penalized because  
20 they either don't have the money to be adequately  
21 promoted on their website, you know, and that's a  
22 pretty important issue.

24 KATE LEVIN: I mean, through  
25 participation in our calendar, that was a

1 strategic partnership we made with NYC & Company,  
2 you know, we have a slot to promote the groups  
3 that we want to promote on NYC & Company's  
4 website, so I would just encourage organizations  
5 that want to be there to, not only sign up for the  
6 calendar, but let us know in advance if they are  
7 doing special initiatives 'cause, you know, we  
8 just read what gets sent in over the transom and  
9 we may not be sharp enough to realize something  
10 coming three weeks from now is a really major  
11 thing that we can get on the phone with our pals  
12 at NYC and say you need to put this up now and you  
13 need to keep it up for the next--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

16 [Interposing] Sure, can I just say, but I  
17 understand that there's a difference between the  
18 calendar, which is great, right, it's important,  
19 it's a tool, and then meaningful promotion--

20 [Crosstalk]

21 KATE LEVIN: [Interposing] Well I  
22 mean, and--

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --which  
24 there are two different elements of that, right?  
25

1  
2 And--

3 KATE LEVIN: [Interposing] That is  
4 correct, but the calendar does the feed the  
5 website homepage. So, you know, in other words,  
6 the definition of meaningful promotion is perhaps  
7 murkier than it should be, but I would say that  
8 the--we are able with our colleagues to, we think,  
9 achieve some fairly substantial webpage presence  
10 on that homepage now. So it is not just about the  
11 calendar anymore, it's about real estate on the  
12 website.

13 The other thing that I will say,  
14 I'm aware that NYC & Company now has essentially  
15 borough president grants, they give funds to each  
16 borough president to distribute for promotional  
17 purposes within the borough and, you know, I think  
18 that has made some inroads. Is it, you know,  
19 enough? It's hard to ever understand what enough  
20 actually is, but I would also--

21 [Crosstalk]

22 KATE LEVIN: --if this is a larger  
23 conversation that I can help create with NYC &  
24 Company, I know they are extremely interested in  
25 not just promoting Manhattan and, you know, the

1  
2 Just Ask the Locals campaign, which they're  
3 reviving, is going to feature more non-Manhattan  
4 cultural assets and, you know, places of  
5 visitation of all kinds, cultural and otherwise.  
6 So, you know, the intent is there, if the  
7 execution needs to be improved on, that's what  
8 we're all here to try and do.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure, I  
10 think it does, and I know you have to go, so I'll  
11 conclude, but, you know, the Queens Chamber of  
12 Commerce, for example, just did a--wrote an  
13 editorial in the Daily News, you know, sort of  
14 pointedly criticizing NYC & Company, and, again,  
15 you're not NYC & Company, I get it, but I think we  
16 have a ways to go and I'd just encourage you in  
17 your role, not only as commissioner, but as a  
18 board member there to help us get to that place of  
19 better equity for smaller and particularly outer  
20 borough institutions.

21 So with that--

22 KATE LEVIN: Duly noted.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --I think  
24 we're going to--

25 KATE LEVIN: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --say  
3 thank you for joining us this morning, we know you  
4 have other things to do and--

5 KATE LEVIN: [Interposing] And  
6 Deputy Commissioner Morton is here to answer far  
7 more ably than I any additional questions you  
8 have.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:  
10 [Interposing] And we're thrilled to have Deputy  
11 Commissioner Morton, so thank you very much.

12 And I want to recognize we've been  
13 joined by Council Member Margaret Chin and Council  
14 Member Mathieu Eugene.

15 And now we are going to--

16 FEMALE VOICE: Question.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, I'm  
18 sorry, Council Member Chin has a question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes, but I  
20 guess the Deputy Commissioner can answer it too.  
21 I mean, just relating to your testimony about the  
22 BID. I mean, as far as I know, BID do not assess  
23 nonprofits so they don't pay a BID fee so I'm  
24 surprised that if some of the--are you saying some  
25 of the BIDs organization are charging a membership

1 rate for cultural organization to be part of it?

2 KATE LEVIN: They don't assess  
3 nonprofits, but similarly, nonprofits, therefore,  
4 don't have the same access to a promotion via BIDs  
5 in most cases. It's just in many cases, BIDs have  
6 come to realize that their nonprofit brethren, who  
7 may not be paying the BID assessment can be  
8 incredibly useful in other ways in terms of making  
9 the BID districts especially appealing in pulling  
10 people in.  
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think  
13 we definitely will talk with DBS about this  
14 because I think most of the BIDs that I know are  
15 really welcoming cultural organization because  
16 they are such a great assets to the community so I  
17 think they're like paying [off mic] to kind of  
18 work with them versus--

19 [Crosstalk]

20 KATE LEVIN: [Interposing] Well,  
21 again, that's something that Commissioner Walsh  
22 has worked really hard to try and create and, you  
23 know, I know he's had me go address a number of  
24 groups of BID leaders to talk about this. So I  
25 did not mean to imply hostility or resistance,

1  
2 it's just it's like NYC & Company, they're  
3 membership based fee-based organizations and  
4 sometimes it takes a couple of really good  
5 examples of how valuable nonprofit culturals are  
6 who may not be able to pay the full assessment,  
7 but nonetheless bring a huge amount of value to  
8 the community in terms of identity and promotion.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Great, I  
10 think we're probably going to hear from some BID  
11 leaders telling us how they work well with  
12 cultural organization and how they welcome them.  
13 Thank you, Commissioner.

14 [Crosstalk]

15 KATE LEVIN: Thank you.

16 [Pause]

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Deputy  
18 Commissioner, I just want to make sure that you  
19 stay with this panel. We're going to call up  
20 Zahra Amanpour from the Department of Small  
21 Business Services and Eric Johnson from the  
22 Economic Development Corporation. And we're going  
23 to hear testimony from both and then we can  
24 continue the line of questions for the panel.

25 And we are joined by Council Member





1 institutions. For example, with financial support  
2 from SBS and the Council Member Letitia James, the  
3 FAB Alliance BID in Fort Greene/Clinton Hill is  
4 energizing the public spaces in the district with  
5 cultural events. Produced in partnership with  
6 BAM, FAB Alliance is offering free arts and crafts  
7 for children, concerts, cultural dance  
8 performances on the Fulton Street plazas this  
9 summer. Not only do these events capitalize on  
10 the area's rich heritage in arts and culture, but  
11 they also change negative perceptions of Fulton  
12 Street and drive foot traffic for local  
13 businesses.

14  
15                   The Lincoln Square BID in Manhattan  
16 is another great example of a naturally occurring  
17 cultural district, with Lincoln Center serving as  
18 an anchor and complementary businesses and  
19 institutions creating a cultural cluster. The  
20 Lincoln Square BID has developed programs to  
21 further synergies with the retail and restaurant  
22 businesses in the district. For example, the BID  
23 created the Lincoln Square Fashion Plate Prix Fixe  
24 during Mercedes Benz Fashion Week. Twenty-one  
25 restaurants participated in a special pre-fix

1 menu, which drew the public to restaurants  
2 surrounding Fashion Week at Lincoln Center.

3  
4 As our work clearly indicates, SBS  
5 remains committed to the cultural sector and  
6 continued strength of the New York City  
7 businesses.

8 Thank you.

9 ERIC JOHNSON: Good morning,  
10 Chairpersons Van Bramer and Reyna and members of  
11 both committees. My name is Eric Johnson and I'm  
12 a vice president at the New York City Economic  
13 Development Corporation's Industry Transformation  
14 Team. I'm pleased to be here to provide  
15 information and answer your questions about the  
16 importance of New York City's creative economy,  
17 and on NYC EDC's efforts to provide creative  
18 sector businesses with access to affordable  
19 workspace, business skills training, affordable  
20 exhibit space, as well as access to capital for  
21 business expansion purposes.

22 A thriving cultural sector is  
23 critical to New York's--

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
25 I'm sorry, Mr. Johnson, can you get closer to the

1 mic?

2  
3 ERIC JOHNSON: Sure. Is that  
4 better?

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: A little  
6 closer.

7 ERIC JOHNSON: A little bit more.

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Yes.

9 ERIC JOHNSON: All right, here we  
10 go. A thriving cultural sector is critical to New  
11 York City's economy, identity, and quality of  
12 life. Statewide, it is estimated that creative  
13 sector businesses generate more than 194,000 jobs,  
14 wages of \$9.8 billion, 1.2 billion in tax revenues  
15 to the state, and have an overall economic impact  
16 of \$25.7 billion. New York City's creative sector  
17 generates over 160,000 jobs, over \$8.2 billion in  
18 wages, and over 900 million in tax revenues to New  
19 York City, and it has an overall economic impact  
20 of over \$21.2 billion.

21 In support of this very important  
22 sector to our economy, NYC EDC administers six key  
23 initiatives. These initiatives are the Artists'  
24 Studio Space, Artist as Entrepreneur, Curate NYC,  
25 Design Entrepreneurs NYC, the Fashion Production

1 Fund, and Made in NYC Media Center.

2  
3 Now I'll go into a little bit of  
4 detail on each of these. First, the Artists'  
5 Studio Space is an initiative that helps emerging  
6 artists access a variety of sizes of studio space  
7 at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in Sunset Park.  
8 Partnering with Chashama, an arts nonprofit that  
9 connects artists with affordable workspaces, this  
10 EDC program provides approximately 50,000 square  
11 feet of space to be used as 90 artists' studios.  
12 The program began in 2008 with 20,000 square feet  
13 of space, and has since expanded to its current  
14 size to accommodate more than twice as many  
15 artists.

16 Second is Artists as Entrepreneur.  
17 EDC, along with its stakeholder partners, New York  
18 Foundation for the Arts, or NYFA, and the Lower  
19 Manhattan Cultural Council, LMCC, launched Artists  
20 as Entrepreneur initiative in 2010 to help equip  
21 New York City's artists, that is visual,  
22 performing, and literary artists, with necessary  
23 business and management skills necessary to market  
24 their work. The program's five-day long sessions  
25 include career planning and business plan writing;

1 marketing and networking; using the Internet;  
2 fundraising; audience development; financial  
3 principals, et cetera. The program has trained  
4 over 255 artists since its launch.  
5

6           Next, the Curate NYC initiative was  
7 launched in 2010 by EDC and Full Spectrum  
8 Experience, an arts nonprofit, in the fall of  
9 2010. The Curate NYC program is a juried  
10 exhibition that showcases the work of New York  
11 City emerging artists and enhances NYC's brand as  
12 a global arts capital. The initiative's  
13 components include a Web-based competition judged  
14 by a panel of curators, and exhibitions of  
15 postcard reproductions of selected artwork, as  
16 well as original works, across the city. Nearly  
17 1,200 artists participated in the inaugural year,  
18 and over 1,500 artists participated in the second  
19 year of the program.

20           Next is Design Entrepreneurs NYC,  
21 which is an initiative created to help support  
22 emerging talent in order to grow the city as a hub  
23 for fashion design. Set to kickoff in June 2012,  
24 this initiative is a collaboration between EDC and  
25 the Fashion Institute of Technology, FIT, which

1 will offer a free intensive mini-MBA program to  
2 provide select fashion designers with the  
3 necessary skills to successfully run a fashion  
4 label, including marketing, operations, and  
5 financial management.  
6

7           Next is the Fashion Production  
8 Fund, which is another new EDC initiative created  
9 to assist emerging designers obtain financing to  
10 allow them to expand their operations during the  
11 critical early growth stages and to ensure the  
12 overall success and expansion of the fashion  
13 industry in New York City. The initiative is  
14 currently in the RFP process seeking proposals.  
15 We had recently the RFP closed on May 4th, and  
16 we'll be seeking proposals from financial  
17 institutions to develop and launch a roughly \$5  
18 million fund to provide loans to emerging fashion  
19 design businesses based in New York City.

20           And finally, the Made in NYC Media  
21 Center, it's a partnership with the Mayor's Office  
22 of Media and Entertainment. The EDC has issued a  
23 RFP for an operator and a physical space to  
24 establish a Made in NY Media Center which will  
25 provide media entrepreneurs with affordable

1 workspace and serve as a central location where  
2 traditional media companies and new media  
3 entrepreneurs can meet, interact, and collaborate.  
4 The center will host workshops, training sessions  
5 to encourage cross-sector learning and creative  
6 cooperation and will support new businesses in the  
7 field of emerging media, including interactive  
8 entertainment, digital advertising, and mobile  
9 apps, by providing high quality, ready-to-use  
10 office space to accommodate a number of companies  
11 and their employees.  
12

13 Together, these six initiatives  
14 provide crucial access to affordable workspace,  
15 business skills training, affordable exhibit  
16 space, and access to capital for business  
17 expansion purposes.

18 Thank you very much. And at this  
19 time, I'd be happy to take any questions that you  
20 may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you so  
22 much to both Zahra and Eric for your testimonies.  
23 I wanted to just take an opportunity to highlight  
24 an area that is very important to me as far as the  
25 manufacturing world and how it's important for the

1 manufacturing zones that are protected as far as  
2 the industrial business zones who produce what  
3 would be a lot of this energy that we're finding  
4 because there's a lot of artists that are  
5 producing a lot of their work within them. And  
6 the artists, not necessarily thinking as a small  
7 business, nevertheless needs, when successful, the  
8 space to be able to assist their work in  
9 continuing to one day reach global recognition.  
10 So I wanted to just ask, you know, what is,  
11 amongst the three agencies here today being  
12 discussed or, if not, would be open to launching a  
13 marketing campaign where we are able to promote  
14 the city's creative manufacturing sector, aspects  
15 of the development world, as well as production  
16 world so that the designer and fabricator are  
17 highlighted? And art and culture originating in  
18 New York City as it moves across the world and  
19 we're able to track it from New York City? And I  
20 don't know if this is something that we are  
21 currently trying to press any type of programming  
22 for and so I wanted to hear from all three  
23 agencies as to what, if any, is happening, will be  
24 happening, or can happen so that we can work  
25

1 collaboratively. And this is, of course, you  
2 know, across the world and other continents,  
3 people are eager to see authentic New York City  
4 made products, and making sure that we're  
5 channeling and referring to the fact that this is  
6 something that we're recognizing as a city, as a  
7 government.  
8

9 ERIC JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean,  
10 absolutely, that's a critical issue, you know, and  
11 I oversee both the fashion and arts desk at the  
12 EDC and it's something that you uniformly hear  
13 about, you know, having an interest in, not only a  
14 locally designed product, but locally made product  
15 as well. And, you know, I think that that really  
16 speaks to--I mentioned the fashion production fund  
17 that we've put together which really I think is  
18 one that we're particularly proud of, given the  
19 fact that it not only is there to really help  
20 emerging designers who oftentimes really face that  
21 lack of access to capital, but part of the  
22 stipulation of accessing those funds is that they  
23 are working with New York City-based factories to  
24 produce that as well. And so I think that from  
25 the programmatic perspective, that's something

1 that's certainly on EDC's radar. And, you know, I  
2 completely agree with you that, you know,  
3 especially with this--this low baritone voice  
4 isn't being picked up, I'll really get in here--  
5 the, you know, with all, you know, 50 million  
6 tourists that come into New York on an annual  
7 basis, having sort of product that is both  
8 designed and made here is something that really  
9 resonates with that customer base and so,  
10 certainly, that is something that we're looking  
11 into, both on the fashion and art side and, you  
12 know, I would point to something like our fashion  
13 fund is something that helps address those needs.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Just to throw a  
15 little wrench into, not just a fund, but marketing  
16 what is in New York City, made in New York City so  
17 the Made in New York Media Center does not  
18 necessarily pick up the production designer aspect  
19 of made in New York and how can we attach what  
20 would be the designer and fabricator Made in New  
21 York campaign model that you've successfully  
22 launched with media center?

23 ERIC JOHNSON: To that point, I  
24 would say that, you know, the marketing side of it  
25

1 is sort of a different piece certainly and, you  
2 know, actually I was just at the MoMA a few weeks  
3 ago and they're actually launching a competition  
4 for--it's a overall program called Destination and  
5 basically what it seeks to do is to highlight  
6 artisans within various regions and New York City  
7 is actually going to be the next area that they  
8 highlight. So working with groups like that to  
9 help support what they do is, you know, part of  
10 what my job entails to make sure that we're, you  
11 know, part of what EDC I think, and my group in  
12 particular, strives to do is to come up with our  
13 own, you know, creative solutions for the  
14 marketplace but to also work with partners at  
15 outside organizations to help promote and to  
16 encourage those types of programs. So that is  
17 something that is, for all of you artists out  
18 there is actually they have an open call right  
19 now, but certainly--

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]

22 Repeat it again.

23 ERIC JOHNSON: Right, but to your  
24 point about marketing, you know, I think EDC not  
25 only looks to create its own programs, but to,

1  
2 again, work with institutions that already have  
3 successful programs and, you know, basically the  
4 marketing dollars to help, you know, promote  
5 those.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And I think one  
7 of the areas that is highlighted time and time  
8 again, the marketing dollars are not there for  
9 this community and it's important that we're able  
10 to take what programs exist and, you know, really  
11 be able to leverage what you are already doing to  
12 expand so that this area we don't leave behind,  
13 but rather complement everything that has already  
14 been launched to continue to seek what is a  
15 booming business in the city of New York, just the  
16 label Made in New York.

17 MARGARET MORTON: Yes,  
18 Councilwoman, I'd say quickly that DCA--

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
20 And identify yourself so--

21 MARGARET MORTON: [Interposing] Oh,  
22 Margaret Morton, I'm Deputy Commissioner--

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you.

24 MARGARET MORTON: --at the  
25 Department of Cultural Affairs. In the spirit of

1 not necessarily marketing but collaboration and  
2 creating resources for artists, our agency has,  
3 recognizing that affordability is probably  
4 affordability for space, of space, is a key and  
5 critical issue facing the arts and the creative  
6 sector, we've created an entity that will be a  
7 nonprofit to create workspace for artists in the  
8 spirit of EDC's incubator, but slightly different,  
9 using public space. So it is collaborative in the  
10 sense that this entity will create with the public  
11 libraries and NYCHA using their existing  
12 underutilized space, space for artists to create.  
13 And so it sort of speaks to collaboration and  
14 being resourceful and creating space for artists  
15 to work. And it's just in its infancy, we're  
16 just--the entity is just being created now,  
17 established now, it'll be a 501(c)(3).

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Fabulous.

19 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: As the Small  
20 Business Committee knows, industrial is close to  
21 my heart and the manufacturing sector is close to  
22 my heart. I couldn't agree with you more, that  
23 the marketing and sort of getting the brand and  
24 name out of these businesses is critical. I wish  
25

1 there was more funding available to do that, but I  
2 can say that what we do do now that is extremely  
3 helpful to these small businesses is we do help  
4 them with their own marketing plans, with their  
5 own sort of branding plans, and we also help them  
6 with working capital and financing that often goes  
7 to marketing plans because that is where a lot of  
8 them are lacking, they know their product, they  
9 know how to make it well, it's getting the word  
10 about it and making sure there's a loyalty to the  
11 brand is really important. So we certainly help  
12 at that level now, but I couldn't agree with you  
13 more that it's sort of an overall branding  
14 strategy is something that a collaboration amongst  
15 the businesses is something that we encourage and  
16 certainly are looking for.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I think we lost  
19 some lights around here. But I wanted to just,  
20 you know, relay the request of the willingness of  
21 each agency, and I know that Commissioner Levin  
22 who had spoken already and said she's open to the  
23 idea of bringing together what would be this  
24 council to discuss a lot of these particular  
25 details that can facilitate the achievement of

1 similar goals by bringing the advocates to the  
2 table and really trying to not be reactive to  
3 complaints, but rather collaborative. And I  
4 wanted to just get your sense of that commitment,  
5 you know, and the possibilities of engaging in  
6 that dialogue.

7  
8 We have been joined by Council  
9 Member Leroy Comrie from Queens, as well as  
10 Jessica Lappin, thank you very much.

11 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: We'd certainly be,  
12 obviously, open to the conversation. I think that  
13 anytime there is collaboration between agencies  
14 which already has proven to be a huge part of our  
15 success and I think taking that dialogue further  
16 would certainly help, absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Commissioner  
18 Morton, I know that the commissioner already said-  
19 -

20 MARGARET MORTON: [Interposing]  
21 Yes, and everything we do is collaborative, we're  
22 a small agency so we are resourceful and we work  
23 actively with all of the agencies, particularly  
24 the real estate agencies and the economic  
25 development agencies. And as I said, Space Works,

1 that is designed actually for us to work with  
2 agencies that have capital assets that are  
3 underutilized. So it's an example, it's not the  
4 larger council--

5  
6 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Correct.

7 MARGARET MORTON: --but we welcome  
8 collaboration.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right. Eric?

10 ERIC JOHNSON: Yeah, I would sort  
11 of echo a lot of those points. You know, I think  
12 at the EDC, just the way that we're structured,  
13 really needing to collaborate with outside  
14 organizations in order to really have our projects  
15 take on a life of their own--

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

17 ERIC JOHNSON: --you know, in terms  
18 of creating some type of marketing campaign,  
19 clearly we've sort of established there being a  
20 need for that or, you know, an interest in that,  
21 and happy to explore some of those concepts  
22 further. To echo the commissioner's point about,  
23 you know, how a lot of when it comes to New York  
24 City marketing, that is sort of the territory of  
25 NYC & Company, but happy to, you know, speak with

1  
2 them from the fashion and arts perspective on ways  
3 that we can incorporate some of those thoughts.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: You're making  
5 Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer chuckle around  
6 here with NYC & Company. Clearly, if we had what  
7 we've been asking from NYC & Company, we wouldn't  
8 be presenting this to you, so clearly, we need  
9 better collaboration.

10 And I just wanted to highlight one  
11 of the issues that I know I've dealt with with  
12 Bushwick Open Studios, I don't know if Long Island  
13 City has dealt with this matter, but this is the  
14 reaction that I'm referring to and prefer the  
15 collaboration. The MTA shutting down train  
16 service during the weekends when the highlight of  
17 what is this major endeavor working all year  
18 round, to then, on one day's notice, there's a 8  
19 1/2 by 11 piece of paper plastered all over the  
20 train station saying, I'm sorry, the L line has  
21 been shut down for the weekend service for the  
22 next three weeks and lo and behold, that's  
23 Bushwick Open Studios weekend and the whole event  
24 is a bust. That is what I want to be able to deal  
25 with in advance to be able to collaborate so that

2 we're not reactive, but preventive. And this is  
3 just one example and the one example is costing  
4 millions.

5 MARGARET MORTON: The Department of  
6 Cultural Affairs is--welcomes in the future  
7 working with them, and Danai is, our external  
8 affairs director, will work with them, you know,  
9 in advance to make sure that we do communicate  
10 with the right entities, including the MTA.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right, and the  
12 failure--

13 [Crosstalk]

14 MARGARET MORTON: [Interposing] --  
15 can guarantee--

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

17 MARGARET MORTON: -what they will  
18 do--

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

20 MARGARET MORTON: --we are happy to  
21 work and help.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
23 And they are too because I have personally called  
24 upon what would be the MTA and they have been  
25 extremely to--you know, perhaps everyone's

1 surprised--extremely collaborative and doing, you  
2 know, extreme measures to mitigate, but I want to  
3 prevent the mitigation and really plan around this  
4 and the issue is that no one's communicating to  
5 them. And I don't know how to click on other than  
6 we have to have this council of different partners  
7 and agencies come together to understand a  
8 calendar year of major events as it pertains to  
9 this community. Thank you very much. My chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah,  
12 we've got a lot of experience with the MTA in Long  
13 Island City, and last year, the 7 train did not  
14 work on the most important weekend for LIC Arts  
15 Open, but I am happy to say that people are very,  
16 very intrepid and it was still a major, major  
17 success, despite the fact that the 7 train was not  
18 running for Open Studios last year.

19 But I am pleased to report that  
20 starting today through the 20th, the 7 train is  
21 scheduled to be running on time for the entire  
22 duration of LIC Arts Open, so we celebrate our  
23 victories as they come.

24 So I wanted to ask primarily the  
25 two agencies if you could highlight some examples

1 of ways in which you've funded and/or supported  
2 small cultural organizations and arts groups and  
3 how you think we could do better at that. [Pause]  
4 Yeah, I know how DCA does it, it's more for you  
5 two guys.  
6

7 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: For us, okay,  
8 sorry, I thought it was going this way.

9 We do not fund organizations, our  
10 financing program is not--there's not an internal  
11 fund for that, so we don't fund any organizations.  
12 Our financing programs are focused on for-profit  
13 institutions so we do not provide funding to small  
14 nonprofit organizations. If it's a hybrid of some  
15 sort in which there's profitability and to the  
16 points that were--

17 [Crosstalk]

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:  
19 [Interposing] Joint ventures?

20 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: Joint ventures and  
21 things like that, we certainly will assist in  
22 those cases and we work with over 40 different  
23 financing partners throughout the city to find the  
24 best option for the organization. But ourselves,  
25 the only fund we have available is our Share

1 Training Grants program and that is--there's very  
2 strict criteria around who that can go to and  
3 there's profitability and increase--

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

5 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: --in revenue  
6 that's attached to that program.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you  
8 have examples where culture and the arts were part  
9 of joint ventures where you were able to kick in  
10 funds?  
11

12 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: Well, no, I do not  
13 have any off the top of my head, I can--I mean, in  
14 terms of, you're talking about financing programs  
15 specifically, no, I do not have any top of my  
16 head, no.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you  
18 think--

19 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: I can certainly  
20 look into it.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

22 EDC?

23 ERIC JOHNSON: Sure, I would say  
24 that there would be a number of programs that I  
25 would point to in terms of, you know, I guess, to

1  
2 respond to your question, I would first point to  
3 our incubator program sort of holistically so both  
4 the collaboration that we do on the fashion side  
5 with the Council of Fashion Designers of America,  
6 the CFDA, where we have our incubator located in  
7 the heart of the traditional fashion district,  
8 it's been a program of great success. And it's  
9 really--you know, I think what we've learned is  
10 especially for these types of sectors, it's not  
11 just about providing affordable space, but it's  
12 about providing supplemental programming,  
13 networking opportunities, mentorship, et cetera,  
14 and--

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

16 [Interposing] I'm a big fan of incubators, we've  
17 got and EDC, you know, we're doing great work with  
18 our food incubators and we've got a wonderful one  
19 on Long Island City that's doing great and I thank  
20 Seth Pinski and EDC for supporting that. And what  
21 about more incubators for the creative arts and  
22 culture?

23 ERIC JOHNSON: Right now, I'm not  
24 aware of any programs that we have to, you know,  
25 when you say more programs to roll out, I mean,

1  
2 certainly, again, I would point to the work that  
3 we're doing at the Brooklyn Army Terminal in terms  
4 of having an incubator in collaboration with  
5 Chashama, and that is an incubator that has  
6 expanded and we have taken on even more artists  
7 and continues to be very popular and we have a,  
8 actually, a waitlist to enter into that space. So  
9 certainly, I would say that is something that, you  
10 know, I can caucus internally to figure out  
11 whether there is sort of the wherewithal to, you  
12 know, take these types of programs even at a  
13 bigger scale, but I would sort of respond to that  
14 by saying, you know, we have a number of programs  
15 that I feel do a very good job in serving, you  
16 know, the arts cultural fashion community at  
17 large.

18 MARGARET MORTON: And, Councilman,  
19 an addendum to that is the Brooklyn Army Terminal  
20 is a site of Space Works and an early first site  
21 we hope to build on what Chashama has done to  
22 actually work and collaborate somewhat with  
23 identifying the kind of differentiated space that  
24 might be suitable because the fact that there's a  
25 waiting list is sort of says it all.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, we love Chashama, they're doing great work. But I think, you know, I asked the question just to illustrate I think we could do more and I encourage the two agencies in particular, obviously, working closely with DCA, to see how we can better support these smaller cultural institutions which are very much small businesses and deserve that institutional support and backing because they are so critically important to the economy. And the city has, rightfully so, enumerated great goals in terms of tourism, right, now we are 50 million, now we want 70 million and all these great challenges that are before us, but it doesn't happen without the creative community, it just doesn't, right, that's what's driving all of this. So if we have a greater goal, it's like any other business, we're demanding greater input, we need more work, we need more output in order to bring more tourists, that requires--and here's the shameless plug for funding--that requires more funding and I realize that the three of you do not determine how much funding comes to culture and the arts, but we need to invest more in the

1  
2 cultural community in order to be able to reach  
3 these goals that we've set for ourselves, which  
4 are good goals, which are the right thing for the  
5 city of New York, 'cause ultimately that generates  
6 more revenue for the City of New York as well.

7 So just encourage that.

8 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: If I could add  
9 also just a clarification from what was said  
10 before, our services, some of them actually  
11 depending on what they are do, actually helps  
12 small arts organizations and cultural  
13 organizations and nonprofits, and those include or  
14 courses, our FastTrac business planning courses  
15 available to those individuals, our courses at our  
16 centers, as well as our recruitment services. We  
17 do have recruitment services that help nonprofit  
18 organizations which do save them time and money  
19 and, obviously, and finding the right employees  
20 for their business. So while not all of our  
21 services can cater to those institutions, there  
22 are some services that we do have that flexibility  
23 and we are happy to do it so..

24 [Pause]

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you, my

1 co-chair. I wanted to just--I wanted to point out  
2 what efforts are underway to inventory space that  
3 has not been created? So has there been a review  
4 of city-owned property that is available and has  
5 that been analyzed to understand what the next  
6 steps are?  
7

8 MARGARET MORTON: Yes, I mentioned  
9 that there is an entity called Space Works--

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
11 Right, which--

12 MARGARET MORTON: --that will be--

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --is developed  
14 already.

15 MARGARET MORTON: Well it's  
16 actually in development, it will be a not-for-  
17 profit whose mission is literally to work with  
18 city agencies and to create--to use underutilized  
19 space, community rooms at NYCHA center, for  
20 example, are not used the way they were  
21 envisioned, public libraries sites that are no  
22 longer used or underutilized are eyed, Brooklyn  
23 Army Terminal, there is space that we're working  
24 with EDC we've identified there, a considerable  
25 amount of square footage there as just another

2 example, Governors Island is also--

3 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

4 MARGARET MORTON: --an opportunity  
5 where there are many older existing buildings  
6 that, quite frankly, are ripe for use. So in that  
7 way, we have done this sort of--

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

9 MARGARET MORTON: --assessment at  
10 least for the purpose of use for artists.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Commissioner, I  
12 want to just throw in piers, garages, senior  
13 centers, schools, empty pools. I know McCarren  
14 [phonetic] was, you know, one of its first to  
15 actually create readaptive use--

16 MARGARET MORTON: Yeah.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --to an old  
18 pool and today gladly soon to be having a ribbon  
19 cutting for our pool--

20 MARGARET MORTON: Yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --comeback, but  
22 these are very creative ways as to spaces that are  
23 underutilized that need readaptive uses during--

24 MARGARET MORTON: Garages, good  
25 idea.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --off hours.

I want to recognize Council Member  
Chin.

[Pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yes, thank  
you, Chair. I just wanted to follow up on the EDC  
testimony, I mean, just based on the facts that  
you lay out that the creative industry, you know,  
generate over 160,000 jobs and it has an overall  
economic impact of \$21.2 billion in the city, and  
has generated over \$904 million in tax revenue,  
and at the same time, they're not, you know,  
getting the support in terms of funding and all  
that. So I guess my question to you is, I mean,  
SBS, you laid out some of the programs that you  
offer can service the nonprofits and this creative  
industry, so it's like how can we sort of like put  
all the resources together so that the artists and  
the people who are in this business--I mean, I do  
want to call them businesses because they are,  
they're generating revenue for the city and  
they're creating all jobs and people who are  
employed by this industry, they pay tax. So even  
though, you know, the organization might be

1 nonprofit, but all the people that they employ and  
2 all their, you know, audience, we all pay taxes.  
3 And so they do, you know, represent such an  
4 important factor in our economy that we really  
5 need to try to support them. Like, for example,  
6 you have this fund that for the fashion industry,  
7 I mean, that fund, you know, is very hard a lot of  
8 time for artists like the filmmaking industry, you  
9 know, there is so many video artists and people  
10 who are making films across our city and a lot of  
11 times it is very hard for them to get money to  
12 help them with their production and distribution.  
13 So I wanted to alert you to that to see how the  
14 city can maybe put together similar funding source  
15 that can help these artists who are doing  
16 filmmaking and video production in our city  
17 because it's made in New York City.

18  
19 And the other part with that is the  
20 whole idea of marketing, but connecting with  
21 distribution because what I see is a lot of the  
22 retail businesses in our city, how can they, you  
23 know, get their hand on products that are made in  
24 New York and they can in turn help sell them.  
25 Because we have problem, you know, in my district,

1           you know, we have a lot of counterfeit stuff going  
2           on, but people want to, you know, get their hands  
3           on stuff that was made in New York, but it's very  
4           hard a lot of time to get to, you know, the  
5           manufacturer or the creator, you know, licensing  
6           and all that to really help these people. But I  
7           think if we're making things in New York, we've  
8           got to be able to distribute them in New York. So  
9           I think that's something that I want EDC to really  
10          look at, how you help with that distribution so  
11          fashions, you know, clothing that are created here  
12          and designed here and made here, how do we get  
13          them to the department store, but also the local  
14          stores in our district, in our neighborhood so  
15          they can help, you know, sell these products. I  
16          think that is something that we really--can make a  
17          big difference in our city.

19                       ERIC JOHNSON: Thanks for that  
20          question. I think that it really touches upon the  
21          key issue, which is to say that, you know, really  
22          when we look at all of our sectors and I think  
23          particularly in fashion, we recognize that this is  
24          about an ecosystem and that you really need to  
25          have, you know, all parts of that value chain in

1 coordination in order to really sort of lift up  
2 these designers and businesses. And so to that  
3 point or question, I would say that, you know,  
4 sort of integrated into so much of what we do, you  
5 know, I had mentioned the CFDA fashion incubator  
6 before and I think that is a great sort of  
7 highlight or rather highlights sort of the issue  
8 that you brought up about it's not just about  
9 design but it's about sort of connecting all of  
10 those pieces. And, you know, one of the ways in  
11 which the CFDA provides support to those designers  
12 in the incubator is really connecting them with,  
13 not only the local production resources, but they  
14 have brought Target on as a one of their lead  
15 underwriters for the program. You know, major  
16 retailers and executives are part of their  
17 advisory board. And so sort of establishing those  
18 relationships, formally or informally, really I  
19 think helps those--provides them sort of the  
20 network to be able to have their product within  
21 some of these larger stores within some of these  
22 retailers so that their New York product, again,  
23 given the scale of production that many emerging  
24 designers have, it's de facto done, sort of, at  
25

1 the local level. And having that network of  
2 retailers who are part of our programs allows  
3 these emerging designers to have a way to sell  
4 through to retail channels that allow these, you  
5 know, Made in New York products to be sold. So  
6 it's very--

8 [Crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: [Interposing]

10 Yeah, I mean, the big retailer, definitely, but I  
11 think also for the local community, you know,  
12 neighborhood retailer, getting to the wholesale  
13 people, to really, you know, get us down as we can  
14 to every single neighborhood to really promote  
15 what we make here in New York.

16 And I read DCA also is like all the  
17 artists that we have, how do we, like, sort of  
18 like, centralized all that creative information so  
19 if neighborhood groups or schools or businesses  
20 want to do some kind of event and they want to  
21 hire some performance, you know, where do they go  
22 and how do they find, you know, these people if  
23 there's like a central directory or artists or  
24 performance group that are in New York, the  
25 productions are here, you know, the creativities

1 are here, and they're available so that any one of  
2 you putting on a street festival and you want to  
3 have a certain performance, you know where to go?  
4 Right now, people don't, they just like maybe they  
5 hear it from their friends or they went to another  
6 program, they saw somebody, they got their cards.  
7 So it's not as organized, but it could be, to  
8 really help distribute in a sense these kind of  
9 resources.  
10

11 So I urge, you know, DCA to really  
12 look at gathering, you know, artists and EDC and  
13 Department of Small Business Service, really  
14 consolidating your resource so people can get  
15 their hand at it and very easily instead of  
16 sorting through your website just to find that,  
17 and EDC to really look at helping with the  
18 distribution and also looking at the filmmaking  
19 and video industry to get them the financial  
20 support that they need. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Eric, I know  
22 you're eager to answer that question or that  
23 comment.

24 ERIC JOHNSON: Yeah, you know, I  
25 feel as if I sort of responded to that second

1 half, but I did want to follow up on that first  
2 part of the question. And, you know, I think that  
3 the obvious answer just in terms of getting  
4 involved on, sort of, locally, you know, made and  
5 produced media and entertainment, I mean, that  
6 really sort of zeroes in on the focus for our Made  
7 in New York Media Center. So absolutely, you  
8 know, we define the cultural creative community  
9 very broadly and because of that, this Made in New  
10 York Media Center is sort of a cornerstone for  
11 what we're doing to support that particular piece  
12 of the creative sector.

14 ZAHRA AMANPOUR: If I could just  
15 add also 'cause an important distribution channel,  
16 it would obviously be the government also and SBS,  
17 as you know, does a lot of work in that area. Our  
18 Strategic Steps for Growth course that caters to  
19 mostly M/WBEs who are interested in selling to  
20 government, it's an educational program for them  
21 to sort of take it to the next level, we are  
22 launching a media and entertainment specific  
23 course this summer. On June 5th, we will have an  
24 open house for it and in September, we plan to  
25 launch the new course. That will educate them on,

1 not only, obviously, having stronger business  
2 plans, but also how to distribute their products  
3 to government and get into that sort of area in  
4 terms of distribution. So hopefully, that will be  
5 something that can help in this area too.

6  
7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Commissioner  
8 Morton?

9 MARGARET MORTON: Yes, just, I  
10 mean, I can think of a few resources that actually  
11 do this much better than we could ever do it. One  
12 thing is Fractured Atlas is an organization, it's  
13 an art service organization that actually has been  
14 working on a digital database to actually to give  
15 information about rehearsal studio space, for  
16 example, to artists. And I know they're in the  
17 testing mode now, but that is out there.

18 The Arts and Business Council has,  
19 obviously, great programs to support nonprofit  
20 organizations in communications and how to use  
21 social media, for example, because, as I  
22 understand it, I'm not a big user of social media,  
23 but my sense is that's how everyone is  
24 communicating and it is incredibly dynamic for the  
25 arts community and for nonprofits and artists and

1 individual artists in communicating with each  
2 other about resources and links.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And,  
5 Commissioner, I want to just specifically with  
6 respect to the central directory, you mentioned  
7 that Fractured Atlas would be an entity outside of  
8 what would be government that would be best fitted  
9 to do a central directory?

10 MARGARET MORTON: Fractured Atlas  
11 is--no, I don't--

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay.

13 MARGARET MORTON: --I mean, I don't  
14 suggest that they should do, but they are doing--  
15 Fractured Atlas is an organization that actually  
16 Cultural Affairs and the City funds and they do a  
17 lot of innovative work in serving the arts  
18 community and serving nonprofits, including in the  
19 area of rehearsal space where they're building a  
20 pretty powerful database that will--that you can  
21 visit and get information about art space and  
22 rehearsal studio space all over the city, they are  
23 actually also done it in a couple of other cities.  
24 So that's just an example of an entity--

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

1                   MARGARET MORTON:  --that we do  
2  
3 fund, that you fund--

4                   CHAIRPERSON REYNA:  Right.

5                   MARGARET MORTON:  --that we all  
6 fund that actually is serving--

7                   CHAIRPERSON REYNA:  Right.

8                   MARGARET MORTON:  --the community  
9 in terms of resources and linking--

10                  CHAIRPERSON REYNA:  Sure, I think--

11                  MARGARET MORTON:  --people to  
12 information.

13                  CHAIRPERSON REYNA:  --I think to  
14 Council Member Chin's point, it's all fragmented  
15 and there's no central point to be able to say,  
16 I'm clicking here because this is where I'm going  
17 to get rehearsal space.  If I don't know Fractured  
18 Atlas exists, I don't know to look for Fractured  
19 Atlas.  Just like Nurture Art is a organization  
20 that has compiled all these artists in what would  
21 be photography or all these different services in  
22 the arts and culture and are able to contribute to  
23 a directory where, if you are interested in a  
24 photographer, in hiring a photographer, you go to  
25 this organization and they will find you and

1 exhibit their sampling of what they offer. So we  
2 want to make sure that the marketing aspect for  
3 distribution of arts and culture services is  
4 accessible and open and transparent and connecting  
5 to the rest of the world. Right now, that doesn't  
6 seem to occur user friendly.  
7

8 MARGARET MORTON: Our director of  
9 Cultural Affairs, Danai Pointer, has just joined  
10 me and she has some--

11 [Off mic]

12 MARGARET MORTON: --very valuable  
13 information to add.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you.

15 DANAI POINTER: I just want to say  
16 that on our website, we link to the open data  
17 source, which is an IT--it's a listing of every  
18 single cultural nonprofit that we support and it's  
19 searchable by artist discipline and by location  
20 and I believe there is a listing of phone numbers  
21 and contact information for those institutions and  
22 links to their website. So if you look on  
23 NYC.gov, all of that information is on there, and  
24 I believe we have a link from the DCA website to  
25 that listing, as well as many other resources.

1 DCA doesn't directly support individual artists,  
2 but we do fund the Arts Councils, as Council  
3 Member Chairman Van Bramer knows, and through the  
4 Arts Councils we provide support to individual  
5 artists. And many of those organizations have  
6 listings of the artists that they work with and  
7 that they support on their websites as well. And  
8 we link to the Arts Councils on our website--

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Great.

11 DANAI POINTER: --on our resources  
12 page.

13 So all of it is there, it's just  
14 people need to know to look at [nyc.gov/culture](http://nyc.gov/culture) to  
15 get that information. And we love your support  
16 and directing people to us to find the information  
17 if they're in need of it.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Well I  
19 appreciate that information and there's always  
20 room for improvement and further collaboration to  
21 achieve all these goals. I want to thank this  
22 panel for their participation. I know we didn't  
23 get to every question we had, so we will forward a  
24 lot of these particular points that we've raised,  
25 but I want to conclude by just saying the

1 convening of an interagency stakeholders council  
2 is very important to me, I'm going to speak on  
3 behalf of my co-chair, Jimmy Van Bramer, that it  
4 is as well. And just making sure that we have  
5 clear milestones that we can work on within this  
6 Council to create a blueprint so that a lot of the  
7 support for neighborhood based cultural clusters  
8 and networks truly gets identified and achieved.  
9 And as we continue to come together, that is even  
10 further possible. A lot of that fragmentation  
11 continues to occur and nothing gets necessarily  
12 synthesized and I would love to see the  
13 synthesization.  
14

15                   And just to make sure that I  
16 express, you know, in the manufacturing world, it  
17 would be great to see tours similar to what  
18 Brooklyn Brewery has done. They've opened their  
19 brewery site to be able to host millions of  
20 tourists coming in on how to brew beer, and it's  
21 perhaps the reason why or not, for microbrewing in  
22 Brooklyn, Brooklyn is the one borough that is  
23 being recognized as the microbrewing borough of  
24 our city. We want to make sure that people have  
25 access to this very vague world of manufacturing

1  
2 and to have an appreciation as to what it takes to  
3 produce something once it's designed, that it's  
4 not just the designer, that it's not just the  
5 production but the connection between the two,  
6 and, obviously, to Council Member Chin's point,  
7 the distribution of both is very important for  
8 that circling back to its origin. Thank you.  
9 Who's next?

10 [Off mic]

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'd like to  
12 call Richard Drucker from the Brooklyn Navy Yard;  
13 Kevin Cunningham from the Lower Manhattan Artist  
14 League--Art League. It looks like auto.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, it  
16 does.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Monica Blum  
18 from the Lincoln Square Business Improvement  
19 District.

20 [Off mic]

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And Naomi  
22 Hersson from No Longer Empty.

23 MONICA BLUM: Here's my statement.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Ma'am, I'll  
25 take--

2 MONICA BLUM: --with you.

3 [Pause]

4 RICHARD DRUCKER: They'll come up,  
5 they have plenty of time.

6 [Pause]

7 RICHARD DRUCKER: Ready? Okay.

8 Good morning, my name is Richard Drucker, I am the  
9 Senior Vice President for External Affairs at the  
10 Brooklyn Navy Yard.

11 Over the last decade, the Brooklyn  
12 Navy Yard has become one of the key hubs for the  
13 intersection of arts, culture, and the economy in  
14 New York City. Of our 275 tenants, artists, and  
15 artisans, and entertainment media sectors  
16 represent nearly 50% of all the businesses within  
17 the Yard. These tenants occupy approximately 15%  
18 of the space, and employ over 2,000 of the Yard's  
19 6,000 workers. Included in this is Steiner  
20 Studios, New York's first major addition of motion  
21 picture studio space in two decades. The \$128  
22 million complex boasts the largest sound stages on  
23 the East Coast and employs over 1,000 people. An  
24 expansion of 295,000 square feet and an additional  
25 investment of \$55 million is now underway.

1                   The Brooklyn Navy Yard is a private  
2  
3 not-for-profit corporation that manage the Yard  
4 under a long-term lease with the City of New York.  
5 BNYDC has targeted industrial sectors with viable  
6 long-term futures in the city, including  
7 commercial artists, artisans, and woodworkers,  
8 serving cultural institutions and housing markets;  
9 and entertainment, film, and media anchored by  
10 Steiner Studios. Also targeted for growth are e-  
11 commerce fulfillment, high-end designers combined  
12 with onsite manufacturing, maritime ship repair,  
13 and warehouse distribution. Our success has led  
14 to a 99% occupancy rate over the last decade.  
15 Based upon this track record, the Yard is in the  
16 midst of its largest expansion since World War II,  
17 adding approximately 2 million square feet of  
18 space and 2,000 jobs over the next two years.

19                   Small, creative-class driven  
20 artisans represent a significant portion of green  
21 manufacturers in the Yard. To further encourage  
22 green manufacturing and be a good neighbor to the  
23 surrounding communities, BNYDC has made a major  
24 commitment to cutting edge green infrastructure  
25 investments and green building development,

1 including the nation's first LEED Gold Certified  
2 multistory multi-tenanted industrial building,  
3 which is fully occupied by artists and artisans.  
4

5 The Yard's revitalization has  
6 provided an opportunity to promote the role of  
7 arts and the economy, to reflect on this unique  
8 place over time and to share the Yard's rich and  
9 continuing history with the public.

10 Last November, BNYDC opened the  
11 Brooklyn Navy Yard Center at Building 92, a highly  
12 visible exhibition, visitors, and employment  
13 center that has helped showcase our existing  
14 tenant base and cultivate potential tenants.  
15 Within the exhibit, a Today's Yard gallery  
16 highlights the diverse tenant base and the  
17 products and creativity within the Yard. To date,  
18 Building 92 has welcomed over 11,000 visitors to  
19 its exhibit and programs. Its public tours were  
20 voted Best Tour 2012 by New York Magazine. The  
21 Brooklyn Navy Yard, through Building 92 and its  
22 thriving tenant base, underscores the importance  
23 of arts and culture as a viable and thriving  
24 sector in the Yard and in New York City.

25 Thank you.

[Pause]

MONICA BLUM: My name is Monica Blum and I'm the President of the Lincoln Square Business Improvement District. Before I give my formal testimony, I just want to clarify the relationship of Business Improvement Districts to cultural organizations. I've been running Lincoln Square for 16 years, there are 67 Business Improvement Districts in New York City, and I'm also the co-head of the mentoring and outreach committee. And I mention that because we visit every new BID immediately after they get formed and the very first thing I tell them is to partner with your local nonprofit, no matter how small.

First of all, the way the statute is written--this is the Administrative Code--not-for-profits that own their buildings are exempt from paying any BID assessment, so Lincoln Center, for example, in my district has 2 million square feet of property, they pay not one single penny. Kaufman Cultural Center, a nonprofit that has a school, it has a music hall, does not pay a penny. The New York Institute of Technology, which has a performance theater now, does not pay a penny. So

1 they are exempt from not-for-profit--from BID  
2 assessments. If a not-for-profit rents space in a  
3 building, then they're charged the BID assessment,  
4 and it's mandatory.  
5

6 So I just want to make clear, the  
7 BIDs do not charge fees, it's a mandatory  
8 assessment and as the BID is being formed and I  
9 was actually--Margaret Chin, I was involved in the  
10 formation of the Chinatown partnership and we  
11 really actively engage our not-for-profits. And  
12 so I just want to clarify that because we have  
13 about 25 not-for-profits in Lincoln Square and I  
14 produce tons of material, I promote them for free,  
15 I hire their performers. So I'll talk about that,  
16 but I think it's important to understand that all  
17 my colleagues, every single one of the 67, really  
18 want to work with their local nonprofits.

19 And we go beyond our boundaries and  
20 reach out to nonprofits, churches, and synagogues  
21 that have performing groups and we promote them as  
22 well, they're on our website. So we really go out  
23 of our way to work with nonprofits, and I work  
24 with, of course, Gale Barren [phonetic] in Long  
25 Island City, so, you know, I know that every one

1 of us goes after our culturals. So I just wanted  
2 to make that very clear. So now do I still have  
3 time to give my--  
4

5 [Crosstalk]

6 MONICA BLUM: Okay. Thank you. So  
7 I'm president of the Lincoln Square Business  
8 Improvement District and when the BID was formed,  
9 Lincoln Center was a founding member. In fact,  
10 they were one of the three or four property owners  
11 who got together and said we need a BID. And  
12 they've been on the board Fordham University, of  
13 course, ABC, Kaufman Cultural Center, and we have  
14 other nonprofits on the board as well, cultural.

15 So when the BID was first formed,  
16 Lincoln Center, which had been built in the 1960s  
17 as part of an urban renewal project, had already  
18 generated considerable development in the area.  
19 Several real estate developers had the vision and  
20 foresight to build major mixed-use properties that  
21 included large residential complexes with retail  
22 and dining opportunities. I'm not going to read  
23 this whole thing, I'm going to skip to the  
24 important stuff.

25 There's no doubt that Lincoln

1  
2 Center was largely responsible for the development  
3 of Lincoln Square and is the economic engine that  
4 has shaped this neighborhood. In our files, I  
5 found an article from The New York Times dated  
6 January 22, 1984, about Lincoln Square which  
7 stated, living in this area is like living on a  
8 stage all the time. Another article about 10, 14  
9 years later described our district as the hub of  
10 culture and entertainment.

11 We have a long history of culture  
12 that predates Lincoln Center, in fact. The  
13 Kaufman Cultural Center was known as the Hebrew  
14 Arts School was founded in 1952, the Professional  
15 Children's School came to Lincoln Square in the  
16 1930s. We also have Fiorello LaGuardia High  
17 School of Music, Art and Performing Arts, the Fame  
18 school. We had the Huntington Hartford Museum,  
19 which is now the Museum of Arts and Design, and  
20 the American Folk Art Museum opened its branch in  
21 Lincoln Square and now that's its permanent home.

22 Over the past 16 years, we've seen  
23 tremendous growth and the number of cultural  
24 organizations, both in and outside our district,  
25 continues to grow. I think we have a NOCD, by the

1 way. The completion of Time Warner in 2004, which  
2 now includes Jazz at Lincoln Center and three  
3 performance venues and a restaurant and bar  
4 collection, features some of the finest dining  
5 options in New York City, and Lincoln Center's  
6 recent 1.2 billion redevelopment all have  
7 contributed to this growth. Today, more than 23  
8 million people come to Lincoln Square annually for  
9 entertainment and culture, for dining, for  
10 shopping. Lincoln Center draws 5 million visitors  
11 each year, and many of them eat in our restaurants  
12 and shop in our stores.

14 Restaurants and retailers want to  
15 be in this exciting, vibrant neighborhood filled  
16 with artists and aspiring performers--we have a  
17 lot of students, Juilliard and ABT and Fordham and  
18 what have you. Long-established businesses, large  
19 and small, have been joined by new ones. Daniel  
20 Boulud opened three places in the last two years  
21 directly across from Lincoln Center and he calls  
22 it his turas [phonetic] looking at Lincoln Center,  
23 so there's no doubt it draws. Our smaller casual  
24 eateries do equally well.

25 Today we have three museums. We

1 have the Museum of Biblical Art, which is an  
2 incredible gem, Museum of Arts and Design, and  
3 Folk Art. We have the new David Rubenstein  
4 Atrium, which Lincoln Center runs, it was a  
5 neglected privately owned public space, and it now  
6 has a visitor center, weekly free performances  
7 every Thursday night, and then more performances,  
8 we use it as well for Winter's Eve. We have 23  
9 movie screens, we have 22,000 seats. And the  
10 interesting thing about the seats--and I'm  
11 including places like the West Side Y, which now  
12 had developed a theater, John Jay has a theater,  
13 Ethical Culture rents out its theater for  
14 performances. So 22,000 seats that are available  
15 for rental to generate income for these not-for-  
16 profits, and we list all these on our website.

17  
18 We have approximately--and then we  
19 have a lot of other, we have Big Apple Circus and  
20 the Met--we have approximately 300 businesses and  
21 not-for-profit organizations in our district and,  
22 you know, I've mentioned all of them, I don't have  
23 to do it again.

24 In 2000, recognizing the draw that  
25 culture has to the city and to this neighborhood,

1 we created Winter's Eve at Lincoln Square. And  
2 the interesting thing about that is it started as  
3 a relatively small festival, it is now New York's  
4 largest holiday festival. We started it when  
5 Lincoln Center still did a tree lighting, they  
6 canceled their tree so now we do it as well, but I  
7 hire all sorts of local artists.

8  
9 And to Margaret's point about how  
10 do I find out about artists, I call my colleagues.  
11 So we've hired Chinese lion dancers and I called  
12 my colleague in Chinatown and said give us some  
13 suggestions. I work with MTA, music underground  
14 and we hire subway performers. Those people are  
15 all available and they're easy to find out about.

16 So we hire from our not-for-  
17 profits, and we also encourage our not-for-profits  
18 to participate. So for Winter's Eve, the Kaufman  
19 Cultural Center will give us performing groups--  
20 young children, accomplished violinists, and other  
21 musicians will play in our banks on Winter's Eve.  
22 And we bring in LaGuardia Show Choir and they  
23 perform in Time Warner Center. We showcase  
24 students from the Professional Children's School.  
25 That's a lot of our entertainment. And we also

1 pay a lot of groups and organizations.

2  
3 Another way to create derivative  
4 business--and I believe this, I'm not really sure  
5 what derivative business is, but I think that we  
6 create some. During Fashion Week--I don't know if  
7 I have my fashion plate--when Fashion Week came to  
8 Lincoln Square, we had 300,000 people come--they  
9 come, it's 169,000 come for each set of shows--  
10 well we decided we've got to get these people  
11 into--thank you, Ralph--get these people into our  
12 businesses, so we created Fashion Plate Prix Fixe,  
13 our own restaurant week, and it's open to  
14 everybody, so you all should come, September 6th  
15 is the next set of fashion shows, and you can get  
16 really great deals at some expensive and some less  
17 expensive restaurants. It's really a great way to  
18 drive the fashionistas into our restaurants. I  
19 haven't figured out the stores yet.

20 And then we do, for the smaller  
21 businesses--the quick serves, the takeaways, the  
22 delis--we do fashion plate crew cuts. So the  
23 crews who are here for five weeks twice a year get  
24 discounts in 23 of the delis and the takeaways,  
25 and so it's great way to generate additional

1 business.

2  
3 Then we produce--I think I'm pretty  
4 much done, I could go on forever--we've expanded  
5 our visitor services and we promote our cultural.  
6 The things that I put in my three carousels are  
7 the publications of the cultural organizations. I  
8 don't put anything in that's, you know, a for-  
9 profit thing, so I will get everything from  
10 Lincoln Center and then all the other small not-  
11 for-profits beyond our boundaries. So we  
12 recognize the critical value of nonprofits and  
13 cultural organizations, we try to really work very  
14 closely and I think that the melding of the two  
15 the way you're trying to do in this hearing is  
16 terrific because I think the synergy is really  
17 incredible.

18 And so thank you. As I said, I  
19 could go on forever, but...

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What is  
21 your budget?

22 MONICA BLUM: Well my budget when I  
23 started was a million, it's now 2 million, and I'm  
24 considered a fairly--

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

2 [Interposing] That's not just your marketing  
3 budget, right?

4 MONICA BLUM: No, my marketing  
5 budget--

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:  
7 [Interposing] 'Cause these are impressive.

8 MONICA BLUM: Well our marketing  
9 budget--so for Winter's Eve, we raise--Ralph is my  
10 right hand, left hand--we raise all the money for  
11 this event, I mean, it's sponsor money. And now  
12 of our \$2 million assessment, about 30% goes to  
13 marketing. It didn't start out that way, you  
14 know, we started with a very simple map, now we  
15 have a good map and--

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's  
17 great.

18 MONICA BLUM: --but it's, you know,  
19 we've grown and it's taken a lot of hard work--

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

21 MONICA BLUM: --and also engaging.  
22 We engage, I mean, what I'm most proud of is  
23 engaging all the people in the district, all the  
24 businesses and all the not-for-profits. And, you  
25 know, as I said even the banks, you should see

1  
2 what they do on Winter's Eve, it's remarkable, it  
3 really, really is.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's  
5 great. Yeah, I think you're doing an amazing job  
6 and I was actually in your area--

7 MONICA BLUM: Oh.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --last  
9 night--

10 MONICA BLUM: Oh.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --for the  
12 New York City ballet--

13 MONICA BLUM: Oh, great.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --gala and  
15 performance, which was terrific. And it's  
16 brilliant what you've done and the things that  
17 you've created. Obviously, some of our BIDs--

18 MONICA BLUM: [Interposing] Are  
19 very small, but--

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --have  
21 less revenue than you, to say the least. But I  
22 think what you've done is a good model and we  
23 could learn from that.

24 MONICA BLUM: Well, you know, I  
25 think that small BIDs can do these kinds of things

1 too on a smaller scale and I know my colleagues  
2 do, I mean, they really do. In Chinatown, for  
3 example, they've done some amazing things and if  
4 you utilize the nonprofits, that's the way you can  
5 do it. And as I said, you know, we hire for  
6 Winter's Eve Dance Parade, and I'm sure you're all  
7 familiar with Dance Parade, you know, they have  
8 like 26 different troupes that there'll be a big  
9 event next week and we don't pay a great deal, but  
10 we do hire. The same for the subway musicians, we  
11 hire them for our summer concert series and I  
12 don't let them collect out of hats, I pay them,  
13 but we're not paying a huge amount of money. You  
14 know, for a two-hour performance, it's a couple of  
15 hundred dollars and it's a great way to support  
16 artists and it's, you know, small BIDs can do that  
17 too, and they do. I think anyhow.

19 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: And so can  
20 non-for-profits.

21 MONICA BLUM: Right.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you  
23 go.

24 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Thank you  
25 for the invitation to be here. Empty space is a

1 blight on the community. One can leave it fallow  
2 or activate the space for the community benefit  
3 until the space can be returned into long-term  
4 commercial use.  
5

6 I'm Naomi Hersson-Ringskog, the  
7 executive director of No Longer Empty. I will  
8 introduce this public arts organization's work and  
9 share how it supports small businesses and  
10 naturally occurring cultural districts.

11 Throughout New York City, No Longer  
12 Empty temporarily repurposes empty storefronts or  
13 buildings into professionally-curated, site-  
14 specific exhibitions that are free to the public.  
15 With each exhibition lasting one to three months,  
16 we collaborate with local organizations to co-  
17 produce accompanying cultural and educational  
18 programming. In just three years, No Longer Empty  
19 has orchestrated 13 exhibitions in different  
20 neighborhoods, exhibited 166 artists, hosted 158  
21 programs and events, and commissioned 104 new  
22 works. In total, we have had close to a million  
23 visitors, with 1,500 children participating in our  
24 educational programs. Of the 13 exhibitions, 5 of  
25 the spaces have been leased or had immediate paid

1 collaborations.

2  
3                   With art at the center, we at No  
4 Longer Empty act as catalysts for community  
5 building, economic revitalization, and cultural  
6 tourism. All important aspects to the success of  
7 small businesses and naturally cultural occurring  
8 districts. Here are the following ways we  
9 contribute: One, with a site-specific exhibition,  
10 we thematically preserve and enliven a  
11 neighborhood's history, narratives, and stories,  
12 and add to its creative place making.

13                   Staging the exhibition offers  
14 career advances for artists, including larger  
15 platform and sales. No Longer Empty typically  
16 presents 8 to 32 artists that are a mix of  
17 emerging and established artists, as well as local  
18 and international artists.

19                   We provide arts and cultural  
20 programming in communities where cuts in budgets  
21 have diminished such programs in schools or for  
22 the general public. For the current exhibit in  
23 the Bronx, we have an average of two school tours  
24 a week averaging 50 children. And as we speak, we  
25 have one tour of 70 children going on right now.

1                   We forge local community  
2  
3 partnerships with cultural organizations,  
4 community-based organizations, and community  
5 boards around the exhibition to stimulate cross-  
6 promotion. Again, for the current exhibition, we  
7 have--it says 17, it's actually 33, Jody corrected  
8 me--with Bronx based organizations showcasing the  
9 cultural landscape to a wider audience. And these  
10 maps that I also distributed show many of the--  
11 show the cultural landscape of the Bronx and some  
12 of the partnering organizations.

13                   No Longer Empty spends our money  
14 locally in the community buying materials,  
15 printing, supplies, and, where possible, hiring  
16 local labor, such as art handlers, as well as  
17 security guards.

18                   With our custom neighborhood maps,  
19 we encourage our audience to linger in the  
20 neighborhood and visit or patron these sites.  
21 Where possible we have arranged incentives like  
22 discounts or 2-for-1 passes in nearby restaurants.  
23 And there's another map which features another  
24 exhibition where we actually had a lot of  
25 restaurant discounts.

2 In a previous City Council  
3 testimony, I discussed Art in Empty Spaces program  
4 that was a collaboration in Spring 2011 with local  
5 landlords, art organization, Fourth Arts Block,  
6 and Manhattan's Community Board 3 that  
7 demonstrated the scalability and the replicability  
8 of No Longer Empty's model. All of these exhibits  
9 bring foot traffic into the community where the  
10 building was previously empty, which benefits,  
11 again, small businesses and cultural districts.  
12 With the help of City Council, organizations like  
13 No Longer Empty can continue to create dynamic and  
14 safer streetscapes for residents and businesses,  
15 bolster the vibrancy and sustainability of  
16 naturally occurring cultural districts, and  
17 attract new visitors and investors to the local  
18 businesses and the general area.

19 We have a few brief recommendations  
20 that the Council can consider. To publicly  
21 endorse the viability of interim use of retail  
22 space; conduct a thorough case study of the  
23 benefits for temporary interim use; establish  
24 major partners from art, Business Improvement  
25 Districts, and real estate; and assist in creative

2 marketing and publicity of these types of  
3 initiatives, and amend funding practices to  
4 accommodate, you know, short-term projects that  
5 you might know a year in advance what exactly it  
6 is, but you know maybe the location; and perhaps  
7 consider a carrot and a stick approach towards  
8 absentee landlords and vacant properties.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: First, I  
10 don't think we've acknowledged that Council Member  
11 Danny Dromm from Queens yet has joined us.

12 And I love No Longer Empty, I love  
13 the work you do. It's not too late to get to the  
14 Bronx, right?

15 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: No, June  
16 5th.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I know  
18 we've been trying to get me up there really,  
19 really hard.

20 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Everyone.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And it's  
22 great work. Did you do this map?

23 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Yes, we do  
24 them all, we research--

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

2 [Interposing] This is fantastic.

3 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: --we  
4 outreach, and we also, if we have enough time, we  
5 will create these incentives with local  
6 businesses.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Looks like a  
8 piece of art.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: This is  
10 really good, this is terrific.

11 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: And also,  
12 if I may say, the reason this is blank is so that  
13 the partnering organizations can put their own  
14 stickers and, therefore, use this for their own  
15 purposes, so it has a sort of duality, not only to  
16 give this to our visitors, but other organizations  
17 can sort of cross-promote in that sense.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I was  
19 wondering why--

20 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Why was--

21 [Crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --because  
23 two panels were left empty, yeah. But--

24 FEMALE VOICE: No longer.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --no

1 longer empty. Every person in the room was  
2 waiting to say that at that particular moment in  
3 time. That's great. That's really cool.

4  
5 And also I just want to say, more  
6 people should come with recommendations when they  
7 testify, I think that's really, really good. So I  
8 don't have any questions, but I do want to let you  
9 know I'm going to try and get up to the--

10 [Crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --the  
12 Bronx to see it, which is tremendous.

13 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: It's easy  
14 to get to.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: As you can  
16 imagine, my cultural calendar is--

17 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Is fully--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --jammers,  
19 we've--

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Oh, we're  
21 crying for you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, no,  
23 it's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it,  
24 Diana Reyna. We've done Snug Harbor, Avondale,  
25 even Metropolitan Museum, Carnegie Hall, the New

2 York City Ballet, Queens Theater in the Park, all  
3 in the last five days.

4 RICHARD DRUCKER: Wow.

5 NAOMI HERSSON-RINGSKOG: Oh, my  
6 gosh.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But I know  
8 it's tough, but someone's got to do it, right?  
9 But you're all--I appreciate everything you all  
10 are doing, so thank you very much.

11 MONICA BLUM: Please put down  
12 November 26. Put down November 26--

13 [background noise]

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I will so  
15 be there, I will so be there.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: His call list  
17 is waiting--

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you  
19 go.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --waiting. I  
21 want to just thank this panel. I do want to just  
22 recognize the work that Lincoln Square has been  
23 doing in partnering with smaller BIDs. I know  
24 that the buddy system is of great value, there is--  
25 -it's priceless to know that the large scale BIDs

1  
2 are partnering with midsize and smaller BIDs in  
3 order to encourage what would be best practices  
4 and make sure that there's growth and the  
5 potential to understand that there are small steps  
6 to get there.

7 MONICA BLUM: Right, it's really  
8 been terrific--

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
10 Monica, press the button.

11 MONICA BLUM: Oh, and, you know, I  
12 think that one of the reasons I was made co-chair  
13 of mentoring with Matt Bauer from Madison Avenue  
14 is we've been doing this a long time--

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

16 MONICA BLUM: --so they call me the  
17 BID yenta, but it's really great. I went out last  
18 week and Atlantic Avenue has a brand new BID--

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right, right.

20 MONICA BLUM: --and literally the  
21 first thing I said was what cultural organizations  
22 do you have, what--

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

24 MONICA BLUM: --nonprofits, you  
25 know, I gave them some other suggestions--

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Sure.

3 MONICA BLUM: --obviously, but we  
4 went to the Bronx, we had a--

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
6 Monica, you're going to have to give a workshop to  
7 all the small BIDs.

8 MONICA BLUM: Well we did, we've  
9 been doing it, we're doing it by borough so we  
10 went to the Bronx, members of our committee went  
11 and met with several of the Bronx BIDs--

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

13 MONICA BLUM: --in the Bronx  
14 Public--

15 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

16 MONICA BLUM: --Library, which was  
17 great--

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

19 MONICA BLUM: --and it was very  
20 useful--

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
22 I'm glad to hear that.

23 MONICA BLUM: --it was great, so--

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [Interposing]  
25 We're going to call upon you moreso than you ever

1  
2 expected--

3 MONICA BLUM: Okay.

4 [Crosstalk]

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --and I wanted  
6 to just make sure that I recognized the Brooklyn  
7 Navy Yard, Richard, the amazing Building 92  
8 tribute to a history, you know, the workmanship,  
9 craftsmanship, veterans, it really just brings  
10 back a past that honors with dignity what has been  
11 perhaps lost. Because we tend to just drive right  
12 by, this now anchors at face value and engages the  
13 outside world from this fortress of what is called  
14 the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Thank you for all your  
15 work.

16 RICHARD DRUCKER: [Interposing] And  
17 we certainly invite everyone to join us and come  
18 to our brand new exhibition center that just  
19 opened a couple months ago.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Very much so,  
21 and I hope that, you know, that there's a third  
22 piece to the Brooklyn Navy Yard that has not been  
23 developed and it would be great to engage the  
24 Brooklyn Navy Yard, its board, Andrew, yourself,  
25 as to what we can do to promote what is the Space

2 Works model perhaps at the actual Brooklyn Navy  
3 Yard dedicating some of that city-owned sites to  
4 developing artist work space. And, you know, in  
5 the future dialogue in the near future, if we can  
6 continue to engage and if you can continue to  
7 participate with what is the NOCD, we will not ask  
8 you to be naked, but we want you to become part of  
9 the NOCD movement.

10 RICHARD DRUCKER: Very good. Thank  
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you very  
13 much.

14 RICHARD DRUCKER: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Can we go  
16 back to NOCDs? I think that--

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I like NOCDs.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --you  
19 know, honestly, really.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Truly.

21 [Off mic]

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'd like to  
23 call the next panel, Anusha--Anusha, you're going  
24 to kill me--Venkatamaran, Kata--

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Raman.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --raman.

3 Venkataraman. Thank you very much, Anusha. Caron  
4 Atlas from the NOCDs; Tamara Greenfield, Fourth  
5 Arts Block; Michael Hickey from Naturally  
6 Occurring Cultural Districts; and Betsy Imershein,  
7 I think we have five seats up there, from the  
8 Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts. I'm  
9 calling them in panels of five and we've been so  
10 generous with time, we're hoping that we can get  
11 to everyone. We don't want to be kicked out of  
12 this room, but I want to make sure that we are  
13 able to hear from everyone. Thank you.

14 [Pause]

15 CARON ATLAS: Are you ready for us?

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Yes.

18 CARON ATLAS: Good. I'm going to  
19 start. Committee Chairs Reyna and Van Bramer and  
20 Council Members, good morning. I'm Caron Atlas  
21 and I'm the co-director of NOCD-New York, or NOCD  
22 New York, the Naturally Occurring Cultural  
23 District Working Group. We're a citywide alliance  
24 of community-based cultural networks and community  
25 leaders that have joined together to revitalize

1 New York City from the neighborhood up. Our  
2 members are located in all five boroughs and they  
3 reflect the diversity of New York City. They  
4 include a nonprofit industrial developer, a  
5 cultural district comprised of small arts  
6 organizations and other small businesses,  
7 community-based cultural hubs, artists, arts  
8 councils, and museums. My testimony will provide  
9 an overview from our coalition.  
10

11 I will describe naturally occurring  
12 cultural districts as we see them, why they  
13 matter, and offer our recommendations for the  
14 City, since you asked for recommendations.

15 Naturally Occurring Cultural  
16 Districts, which we call NOCDs, anchor  
17 neighborhood-based cultural economies that reach  
18 beyond neighborhoods to have citywide and, at  
19 times, regional impacts. Rather than operating  
20 from the top down, they are self-organized with  
21 local leadership and they're an organic part of  
22 the community. They cross sectors with arts and  
23 culture, small business, manufacturing, education,  
24 environment all coming together.

25 The cultural ecologies of NOCDs

2 interweave social, civic, and economic benefits  
3 within and across communities. And the economic  
4 benefits often flow from the social and civic  
5 ones. NOCDs stimulate development that has a  
6 double bottom line and a focus on an equitable and  
7 sustainable distribution of opportunities and  
8 benefits. Additionally, they are hubs of  
9 creativity and entrepreneurship, and function as  
10 support systems for shared challenges.

11 We are highlighting recommendations  
12 that can be implemented in the short term to  
13 strengthen NOCDs and local cultural economies.  
14 The specifics of these broad categories are  
15 included in bullet points on the attached  
16 testimony on the second sheet, and will be  
17 illustrated by our members when they speak.

18 Our recommendations are, one,  
19 prioritize equitable distribution of opportunities  
20 and benefits related to cultural economies. Two,  
21 support cultural incubators and mission driven  
22 ownership. Three, reduce city bureaucracy and  
23 burdensome regulations. Four, provide access to  
24 public space. Five, use public resources to  
25 support neighborhood-based culture. Six, include

2 cultural leaders in decision-making.

3 And a few details on this last  
4 recommendation, which have already been raised, we  
5 really urge that you convene stakeholders in an  
6 interagency roundtable or council to really create  
7 this blueprint of support for neighborhood-based  
8 cultural clusters and networks.

9 We also recommend that you  
10 establish knowledgeable cultural liaisons at and  
11 with Council Member offices and that you support  
12 cultural committees on community boards.

13 We're happy to work with you on all  
14 of these recommendations, and we invite you to  
15 join us this spring when we're having several  
16 tours of the naturally occurring cultural  
17 districts that are part of our membership.

18 Thank you so much for having this  
19 hearing and for the opportunity to testify.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I just  
21 want to take a moment to say that I am proud to  
22 have the best cultural liaison ever in Matt  
23 Wallace, who is my deputy chief of staff and who  
24 handles all culture for myself. So I don't know  
25 where he is, but a little shout out, I hope he

1 heard that honestly.

2 [Pause]

3 ANUSHA VENKATARAMAN: Right, I'm  
4 going to go ahead and go. Good afternoon, Council  
5 Members, I think it's afternoon now, and thank you  
6 to Chairpersons Reyna and Van Bramer for the  
7 opportunity to speak today. Council Member Reyna  
8 is also our Council Member, so we're super excited  
9 about that.  
10

11 I'm here on behalf of El Puente,  
12 which is one of the original members of the  
13 naturally occurring cultural district work group  
14 and is also one of the most comprehensive Latino  
15 arts and culture institutions in New York City.  
16 It's a 30-year old community human rights  
17 institution in North Brooklyn, Williamsburg, and  
18 Bushwick, that promotes leadership for peace and  
19 justice through the engagement of youth and  
20 community members through the arts, education,  
21 scientific research, wellness, and environmental  
22 action. I'm the Assistant Director of the El  
23 Puente Green Light District, which is a 10-year  
24 campaign to transform the south side of  
25 Williamsburg, Los Sures, from one of the most

2 challenged economically and environmentally  
3 neighborhoods in New York City into a rich, safe,  
4 culturally engaged, civically engaged community.

5 The community of Los Sures, to give  
6 you a little bit of context, reflects a rich  
7 history of Latino arts and culture and today the  
8 south side is home to a host of creative people,  
9 places, businesses, and cultural organizations.

10 El Puente is only one such organization, but  
11 through the Green Light District we're convening a  
12 network of cultural stakeholders, which include  
13 other nonprofits, informal networks of artists,  
14 and also institutions that are not always thought  
15 of as culturally-oriented but certainly are, such  
16 as churches, schools, and small businesses of all  
17 sorts. For example, El Puente convenes the  
18 Community Artists' Development and Resource  
19 Exchange, or CADRE, which is a network of mostly  
20 Latino artists and artists of color, artisans, and  
21 cultural workers in North Brooklyn. CADRE artists  
22 collectively advocate for equitable access to  
23 artistic and cultural expression, we work to  
24 incubate artists' work and small artistic and  
25 creative enterprises. These are also very

2 holistic in nature, for example, there's a artist  
3 dancer/wellness practitioner who we're helping to  
4 incubate some of her work in spaces in the south  
5 side.

6 The policy recommendation that I'm  
7 going to focus on is prioritizing the equitable  
8 distribution of opportunities and benefits related  
9 to cultural economies. These CADRE artists that I  
10 mentioned before are self-organizing and  
11 collectively supporting each other because they're  
12 drowning in the larger collective landscape of  
13 Williamsburg, which has changed rapidly and they  
14 feel that they really need to work together to  
15 maintain access to the resources of the community.

16 Many of those artists have lived  
17 and worked in the community for decades, but their  
18 art forms, their craft, their artisanship is  
19 sometimes not as visible, recognized, and well  
20 funded as other art forms and modes of cultural  
21 expression that Williamsburg is known very well  
22 for. We value those art forms as well and are  
23 working to bridge these communities and encourage  
24 people to work together as artists, as neighbors,  
25 as community members.

2 So the recommendation here is that  
3 city criteria for excellence as defined by city  
4 policies and funding sources must recognize this  
5 wide diversity of artistic and cultural practices  
6 which must be supported, some of which are  
7 informal, some of which are hard to define, but  
8 they need to be included. Also, the venues that  
9 support this diversity of cultural practices must  
10 be promoted and funded.

11 We're working to nurture and  
12 activate some of these nontraditional spaces for  
13 arts and culture, including some of the church  
14 basements, public parks, we have a community  
15 garden that we manage and have all sorts of  
16 cultural activities there. The Space Works  
17 program, for example, will be a fabulous  
18 opportunity for our artists and for the many  
19 organizations in our community, but we need to  
20 continue to think about who will have access to  
21 those spaces and what will happen in those spaces,  
22 and that diversity and equity must be continually  
23 considered at the very front of the agenda.

24 I think I'm probably running out of  
25 time, but I do want to say that the formal

2 recognition of NOCDs and cultural hubs is integral  
3 to ensuring that these strong cultural communities  
4 that have been in New York City for decades do not  
5 continue to be disrupted by economic development  
6 policies, which may not consider fully the impact  
7 on those cultural communities. Artists, and  
8 cultural organizations, networks need to be a part  
9 of that assessment process in planning and  
10 development and other policies. You know, for  
11 example, I think that many of the vacant lots and  
12 sites in our community that could be utilized for  
13 cultural purposes are HPD owned, HPD should be,  
14 you know, at the interagency table and artists  
15 should be included in the assessment and creation  
16 of some of their policies.

17 I think also in thinking about the  
18 formal recognition of NOCDs, that we need to  
19 expand our idea of cultural institutions more  
20 broadly so that it includes these neighborhood-  
21 based networks, hubs, and clusters who can be a  
22 little bit harder to define than a BID, say, but  
23 do deserve the same level of support and  
24 recognition.

25 One last point on the support and

1 recognition and also visibility in marketing, this  
2 is important, not just for purpose of bringing in  
3 tourists or generating that sort of street  
4 traffic, but also validation, recognition that a  
5 wide diversity of artists and cultural practices  
6 need to be highlighted because they need to know  
7 that they are valued in the city and they need to  
8 know that the entirety of the city of New York  
9 wants to see them here and see them stay.  
10

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you,  
13 Anusha, and I just wanted to thank you for all the  
14 work you're doing on behalf of our community  
15 because as the Green Light District has evolved,  
16 it's taken on a greater mission than it ever  
17 perhaps assumed it could take, and one of those  
18 areas is the decking of the BQE where  
19 nontraditional open holes like the BQE separating  
20 communities and your efforts to bridge community,  
21 that requires enormous level of political will and  
22 funding at all three levels of government and  
23 bracing that with a stakeholder's approach is  
24 exactly why I stress this convening of interagency  
25 collaboration. Because until that happens, a

2 project at that level could never happen. And  
3 that will increase the cultural identity of a  
4 community that is drowning, as you said, in the  
5 new Williamsburg that everyone recognizes  
6 worldwide, that does not include the El Puentes of  
7 the world and should. Thank you.

8 TAMARA GREENFIELD: Okay. Thank  
9 you, Chairs Reyna, Van Bramer, and members of the  
10 City Council, for this opportunity to testify in  
11 support of naturally occurring cultural districts  
12 and our relationship to the local cultural  
13 economy. I am Tamara Greenfield, I'm the  
14 Executive Director of Fourth Arts Block, or  
15 FABnyc, a neighborhood wide coalition of 26 arts  
16 and community organizations in the East Village  
17 and Lower East Side. I'm also co-director of the  
18 NOCD-NY working group and a public member of the  
19 Community Board Arts and Culture Task Force.

20 As a neighborhood wide coalition,  
21 FABnyc works with our members to provide support  
22 services, facilitate resource sharing, and build  
23 deeper partnerships with the community. In  
24 particular, we have worked with local partners to  
25 raise the visibility of culture and small business

2 through common place making tools like maps,  
3 websites, banners, public events, and a visitors  
4 center. In the process of pursuing these and  
5 other community improvement strategies, we have  
6 faced a wide array of confusing regulations and  
7 obstacles.

8 I could talk on any of our topics,  
9 but I was assigned the regulation and bureaucracy,  
10 so excuse me as I go into some of those. These  
11 obstacles are difficult for everyone, but hit  
12 smaller groups and businesses the hardest. In  
13 general, there is a bias towards big arts  
14 institutions and business in our city's  
15 policymaking and actions, leaving smaller groups  
16 and businesses to fend for themselves often.

17 Here are some tangible  
18 recommendations to help ease these challenges:  
19 Streamline guidelines to help community-based  
20 efforts to improve street-level visibility. NOCDs  
21 are often hurt by lack of visibility to the  
22 general public. Several years ago, FAB led a  
23 participatory streetscape design process with our  
24 small businesses, our cultural organizations, and  
25 mostly low income residents to increase signage,

2 improve lighting, and plant more trees. Even with  
3 funding from our Council Member Mendez, most of  
4 those proposed improvements have stalled. Agency  
5 rules governing streets and public spaces are  
6 often in conflict and require long, unclear  
7 approval processes, which generally, the agencies  
8 themselves are not completely clear on.

9 Ease and clarify street activity  
10 permitting guidelines for community-based  
11 festivals. We organize several festivals and  
12 street closures each year. We've almost become  
13 sort of an expert on these. These events offer  
14 free access to cultural programming for our  
15 community and bring new visitors and businesses to  
16 the neighborhood. Each year it gets harder and  
17 harder for us to produce these programs, as the  
18 Mayor's Street Activity Permit Office creates more  
19 and more rules that are really intended to prevent  
20 large commercial street festivals, but have no  
21 accommodation for small community-based efforts,  
22 which I think we would all agree, have value to  
23 the communities that they're a part of.

24 We will completely mirror the  
25 encouragement to NYC & Company to promote

2 neighborhood cultural vitality. Even as a  
3 Manhattan-based organization, we have found it a  
4 major struggle to get any kind of real promotional  
5 support, even though we have fronted the \$675 a  
6 year for an annual membership, which is no small  
7 fee for us. Most of the marketing is focused on  
8 large institutions or highly recognizable  
9 locations, which then also benefits only those  
10 businesses in the areas around it. By  
11 diversifying the kinds of promotion that they do--  
12 and we mean not just placement on the website, but  
13 real, deep promotion about the vitality of New  
14 York City's neighborhoods--we can distribute the  
15 benefits of that visitorship and attention, which  
16 includes a large part of New York City visitors  
17 and our own population visiting the city that  
18 we're part of. In places like San Francisco, I  
19 understand that street banners are provided free  
20 to arts and community groups to increase  
21 visibility of local culture. In New York City, it  
22 costs us upwards of 2,000 a year for one banner  
23 each year. And we've been doing that for the last  
24 four years, it costs us 12 to 15,000 a year to  
25 have banners in our neighborhood and it takes a

2 lot of foot power for us.

3 The other thing is I'd like to  
4 encourage us to learn from some of our other  
5 successes in New York City, we've done some  
6 tremendous work. We opened a café and visitors  
7 center last year. The City's New Business  
8 Acceleration Team, as they're NBAT, helps small  
9 food businesses open quickly by unifying  
10 guidelines for several agencies. We opened in one  
11 month, it was amazing and a really great model for  
12 a lot of different programs.

13 I have a few others, I mirror the  
14 groups purchasing is a great program, we're really  
15 looking forward to working with Space Works on a  
16 lot of different opportunities in the city to  
17 develop affordable workspace.

18 I just want to mention one thing  
19 'cause there's been a lot of talk about BIDs, that  
20 pre-requires that there is a actually a BID in the  
21 community that we're talking about. A lot of the  
22 neighborhoods that we work with do not have BIDs  
23 and, therefore, a lot of the groups that are part  
24 of our coalition are playing that kind of role,  
25 but we don't have any kind of financing that can

1 [off mic] to do it, so we do, like in particular  
2 in East Village, we do a lot of work with small  
3 restaurants, small businesses, but with completely  
4 unfunded and we can't qualify for Small Businesses  
5 Services funding based on the rapid gentrification  
6 of our neighborhood.  
7

8 So that's just some other things to  
9 keep in mind.

10 [Pause]

11 BETSY IMERSHEIN: Thank you, Chair  
12 Member Reyna and Van Bramer and members of the  
13 City Council--excuse my cold. Thank you for the  
14 opportunity to testify in support of naturally  
15 occurring cultural districts and their crucial  
16 importance within and across the communities of  
17 our city. I am Betsy Imershein, a member at large  
18 of Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New  
19 York, a consultant working in the neighborhoods of  
20 New York City involved in community, economic, and  
21 cultural development. Additionally, I am an  
22 artist, having worked in and been a producer of  
23 nonprofit theatre in New York City for many years  
24 and a photographer with ten published children's  
25 books. I tell you all of this to explain the

2 breadth of my experiences related to the issues  
3 that brought us here today and to highlight the  
4 importance of areas that support the creative  
5 economy and naturally occurring cultural  
6 districts.

7           And so to do this, I would also  
8 like to share with you a few stories. I've been  
9 working with Fourth Arts Block now for several  
10 years and I have repeatedly heard from city  
11 agencies that they don't know what to do with us  
12 and they ask why don't we become a BID. There are  
13 potentially several answers to that question, but  
14 the simplest is that we can't since two-thirds of  
15 the property owners in the district are nonprofit  
16 entities. I also want to add from Tamara's  
17 testimony that actually she hired me about three  
18 years ago, thinking that I'd be working with her  
19 for three to six months maximum to help move  
20 forward some of the streetscaping that she  
21 referred to that still is not in force or and  
22 never was able to implement. Now I've gone on to  
23 do other work with her, it's been a wonderful  
24 collaboration, but that just gives you a sense of  
25 the kind of difficulties that we've been having.

2 Another story, in launching and  
3 directing the Maspeth Industrial Business Zone in  
4 2006, one of my chief responsibilities was  
5 advocating for the over 550 industrial and  
6 manufacturing companies in my zone. That advocacy  
7 took many forms, and during my tenure, one of the  
8 ongoing issues I had to deal with was the illegal  
9 conversion of manufacturing space for artist use,  
10 both residential and for workspace. Another  
11 component of that advocacy was the recognition of  
12 the breadth of the creative industries existing  
13 and expanding in Maspeth.

14 And my third story, recently  
15 working on a project in Long Island City, an  
16 executive director of one of the large arts  
17 organizations in the area told me their work was  
18 intertwined with over 80 businesses in the  
19 surrounding community. And I think that's  
20 absolutely amazing. They were commercial and  
21 industrial businesses that helped her arts  
22 organization thrive and exist. She didn't know  
23 how they would produce their work and function  
24 without them. And all this was being said through  
25 a prism of her concern that industrial businesses

2 were being pushed out because of the development,  
3 high land values, and, therefore, rents that are  
4 increasingly unaffordable.

5 So to conclude my comments, I want  
6 to make these recommendations that we need to  
7 strengthen--the city needs to strengthen naturally  
8 occurring cultural district activity and  
9 neighborhood-based economies by incorporating  
10 formal recognition with equitable funding. And  
11 that we should use information and lessons from  
12 BIDs and merchant associations in historic  
13 districts to successfully implement this, not  
14 force us to become in the model of a BID or some  
15 other existing, but to honor the community assets  
16 and the personality of each individual district  
17 and naturally occurring district as it becomes and  
18 it forms.

19 Also, we need to stabilize current  
20 manufacturing areas and continue to provide  
21 funding for ongoing development of affordable  
22 manufacturing space for businesses and creative  
23 industries. And we must create and convene an  
24 interagency stakeholders forum that focuses on a  
25 blueprint to support both the needs of

2 manufacturing businesses and the needs of artists  
3 and creative economy so that they no longer  
4 compete for the limited affordable spaces and  
5 resources in their neighborhoods. That's  
6 certainly what I saw happening in Maspeth in the  
7 industrial business zone. And that through that  
8 there will be support for neighborhood-based  
9 cultural clusters and networks.

10 Thank you very much.

11 MICHAEL HICKEY: Council Members, a  
12 pleasure to be before you again today, thank you  
13 so much for holding this hearing and for having  
14 the brave patience to sit through lots of  
15 testimony from people very passionate about the  
16 work that we do. So we appreciate that you've  
17 given us this forum.

18 My name is Michael Hickey, a lot of  
19 you know me from my previous work with the Center  
20 for New York City Neighborhoods on citywide  
21 foreclosure prevention. Some of you may also know  
22 me from my work at Deutsche Bank, where I actually  
23 ran arts and economic development initiatives  
24 there and did a lot of funding around the city of  
25 efforts to combine local cultural clusters and

1 activate small business and community  
2 revitalization.  
3

4 I'm currently a member of the NOCD  
5 working group, that's the N to the O to the C to  
6 the D to--

7 [Laughter]

8 MICHAEL HICKEY: --and I'm also  
9 doing some research on cultural data project data  
10 and doing a lot of other independent consulting  
11 around town that brings me in contact with groups  
12 doing both economic development and cultural  
13 activities.

14 I think that I just kind of want to  
15 point out a couple of inconsistencies in what I  
16 see out there. You know, the cultural data  
17 project is a terrific initiative, it's a national  
18 initiative, it's collecting tons of information  
19 about kind of the financial profile of individual  
20 creative organizations to try to better understand  
21 their own internal operations and how they compare  
22 to one another and interact in their communities.  
23 But it's a massive undertaking, I mean, any  
24 organization here that's had to fill that out and  
25 there are 600 variables that are tracked in this

2 and we're really requiring groups to kind of share  
3 the innards of their financial lives, cultural  
4 groups to justify their existence in a way that we  
5 don't ask our BID members to, we don't ask our  
6 parks to, we don't ask our business--or rather, an  
7 industrial retention zone partners to, and we  
8 certainly don't ask our, you know, the  
9 multimillion dollar recipients of corporate  
10 retention bonuses to.

11                   So we really have kind of a double  
12 standard that exists now, and you've heard a lot  
13 of testimony already, you kind of get it, right?  
14 This, we walk like a duck, we, you know, quack  
15 like a duck, that kind of thing. We're doing all  
16 this work in neighborhoods where there really  
17 aren't designated, formally designated cultural  
18 clusters or even BIDs and what we're saying is  
19 it's just overdue. You know, we've been doing  
20 this work for a long time, it kind of starts to  
21 feel like not so much like the city is subsidizing  
22 our work but we're subsidizing the city because  
23 these are groups that are already doing the work  
24 of providing technical assistance to partners in  
25 their community, convening events, marketing,

1 communications, you know, building back end  
2 supports. I mean, you know, FAB's online  
3 ticketing services were, you know, really  
4 beneficial for the cultural organization that my  
5 wife runs. I mean, you know, all this is  
6 happening and we're all doing it all, you know,  
7 because we know we need to do it, but without  
8 really any official designation or support.

9  
10 Council Member Reyna, you've  
11 mentioned several times that you would like to see  
12 this interagency convening happen, of course, we'd  
13 love to have that as well. We feel like we can  
14 work together to resolve some of these things and  
15 really make all of our work much more effective  
16 and expanded beyond the communities where it's  
17 currently in existence.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, did  
20 you plan that for 2 1/2 hours, the N to the O to  
21 the C to the D?

22 [Laughter]

23 MICHAEL HICKEY: Way back.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That was  
25 really good.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Pretty  
3 impressive.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, that  
5 was--I've never heard that actually in 2 1/2 years  
6 on the Council testimony, I have..

7 [Laughter]

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: We have  
9 ticketed--

10 [Crosstalk]

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:  
12 [Interposing] Usually I'm the funny one, but that-  
13 -

14 [Laughter]

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --was  
16 pretty good.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you to  
18 this panel, I--

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:  
20 [Interposing] You love co-chairing hearings with  
21 me, don't you, Diana Reyna?

22 [Crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I do, I enjoy  
24 them so much. And it makes the thick air in small  
25 business thinner. And this is quite an amazing

2 panel, I thank you for all of your work and the  
3 passion drives this, but you've done remarkable  
4 work with the very little opportunities that there  
5 are and heavy regulations.

6 I was commenting to my co-chair  
7 that the regulation review panel that has been put  
8 together in the past for small businesses is  
9 something we can take a look as one of the primary  
10 items on the agenda when convening this group,  
11 this council, whatever we want to call it with  
12 government stakeholders and the advocates to be  
13 able to go through a menu of reducing or  
14 alleviating what would be the impediments of  
15 making sure that the N to the O to the C to the D  
16 continues to thrive. And I want to commit to you  
17 that both chairs are eager to see that occur.

18 You know, it would be nice to have  
19 a similar creation of a BID model, perhaps a CID  
20 model, a Cultural Improvement District, right?  
21 Because we're not talking about--no offense to  
22 you--a MoMA, right? We're referring to that third  
23 tier, nonetheless, just as important, if not even  
24 more so because for Williamsburg, Bushwick to  
25 receive a MoMA anytime soon, I could hold my

2 breath, but we can certainly understand that if  
3 there's anything people want to do these days,  
4 it's coming to Williamsburg Bushwick. And so  
5 that's my district and I want to make sure that we  
6 understand the difference as to how do we nurture,  
7 support, and engage the NOCD community to be able  
8 to support them in a very valuable way. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I just  
11 want to add, and I know Chair Reyna knows this, I  
12 represent MoMA PS 1, not MoMA--

13 [Laughter]

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --which  
15 there's a slight difference in scale--

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Sorry.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --like of  
18 about a billion dollars, I think. But they're  
19 both wonderful institutions, for the record. And  
20 I just want to say thank you because you all have  
21 been doing this for a long time and there have  
22 been a lot of planning meetings. And I just want  
23 to thank you and urge you to keep going because I  
24 know at times it feels like things aren't  
25 happening, they're aren't happening as quickly as

2 we want them to be happening. And just know that  
3 we believe in you, and we believe in this, and  
4 it's only because of what you've been doing and  
5 prodding us along. And, obviously, Chairwoman  
6 Reyna is very, very driven on this topic and so,  
7 you know, I know we've been all talking and  
8 meeting and there's been meetings that you're  
9 doing, like, a lot more meetings that we're not  
10 even a part of, but it's working and I want to  
11 encourage you to keep doing this work. Thank--

12 [Pause]

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And our  
14 next panel is Kellie Terry from the Point;  
15 Cassandra Smith, Greenpoint Manufacturing Design  
16 Center; Verdery Roosevelt, Upper Manhattan  
17 Empowerment Zone; Ryan Gilliam, Downtown Art; and  
18 Maria--

19 [Off mic]

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --Bauman.  
21 All members of NOCD. Correct?

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: All right.

24 [Long pause]

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'm going to

2 play the bad guy now, we just want to make sure  
3 that we have sufficient time so--and we have a  
4 panel, the next panel, if they are patient and  
5 wait, we have a panel of six left, but we want to  
6 make sure we hear everyone so I'm going to put on  
7 the clock so that way you at least are gauged into  
8 a time frame. Thank you.

9 [Pause]

10 CASSANDRA SMITH: Good morning. My  
11 name is Cassandra Smith, I'm the Senior Project  
12 Manager for the Greenpoint Manufacturing and  
13 Design Center, the city's premier nonprofit  
14 industrial real estate developer. And we're also  
15 a member of the Naturally Occurring Cultural  
16 District Working Group. I'd like to speak today  
17 about the policies that support creative  
18 industries in New York City and encourage that  
19 they be continued and expanded. I'd like to start  
20 by highlighting the role that the naturally  
21 occurring cultural districts can and do play in  
22 the city's small business economy.

23 GMDC works at the intersection of  
24 arts and industry. We've developed over 600,000  
25 square feet of industrial space in New York City

2 and we currently own and manage four buildings in  
3 North Brooklyn, in Council Member Steve Levin's  
4 district and Diana Reyna's district. Those  
5 buildings house over 100 small manufacturing and  
6 artisanal businesses which together employ more  
7 than 500 workers. And from our tenant survey, we  
8 know that these businesses represent the diversity  
9 of New York City's manufacturing sector--custom  
10 woodworkers and cabinet makers, metalworkers,  
11 jewelry makers, fine artists, display makers,  
12 specialty electronics manufacturers, milliners,  
13 glass and ceramic artists, and the list really  
14 totally goes on.

15                   Ninety-one percent of the business  
16 owners and employees live in New York City, many  
17 within the zip codes adjacent to the buildings  
18 where they work. And the jobs in our buildings  
19 provide a high quality option for what we consider  
20 to be a key segment of the population--46% of the  
21 employees in our building speak English as a  
22 second language; employees in GMDC's buildings  
23 make an average of 42,000 annually, which is  
24 compared to 27 and 25,000 for retail and food  
25 service, respectively. So we think there are

1  
2 quality jobs in our buildings that also bring a  
3 total of 65 million in revenue annually to the  
4 city, with an additional 35 million being induced  
5 or indirectly generated as part of the clustering  
6 effect.

7           And so our statistics tell the  
8 story that arts and industry are important to the  
9 city for their economic value, as well as their  
10 cultural value. And our multi-tenanted buildings  
11 are located in light manufacturing districts where  
12 businesses connect, share resources and services,  
13 and contribute to the local, the neighborhood, and  
14 citywide economy.

15           We'd like to emphasize how  
16 important it is to stabilize the current  
17 industrial areas by maintaining, strengthening,  
18 and especially enforcing the manufacturing zoning.  
19 Stable areas allow creative businesses to grow,  
20 hire, and spend in New York City's naturally  
21 occurring cultural districts.

22           GMDC works to provide long-term  
23 space for creative businesses in development  
24 projects that are funded with a mix of City  
25 Council capital dollars, thanks to the Brooklyn

2 delegation, as well as to Councilwoman Reyna and  
3 Councilman Levin's office, the federal tax credit  
4 programs, and private debt. The support of the  
5 city through the capital funding programs, IDA's  
6 tax exemptions, and support on tax credit  
7 proposals is essential to development for creative  
8 small businesses.

9 And I'm done.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Cassandra, just  
11 continue.

12 CASSANDRA SMITH: Okay. It's  
13 short.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: You're almost  
15 done.

16 CASSANDRA SMITH: So GMDC would  
17 like to thank the Council for their support for  
18 our projects and encourage the continuation of  
19 these programs and policies so that New York  
20 City's creative industries can continue to  
21 flourish in affordable manufacturing space.

22 And finally, an additional policy  
23 that could establish or stabilize flexible  
24 workspaces in these cultural districts would be  
25 low-cost financing programs. Affordable debt

2 programs to mission driven landlords, including  
3 nonprofits and creative industry leadership, would  
4 be an important tool in creating space where work  
5 can happen and help creative businesses continue  
6 to be a central part of New York City's identity.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you so  
8 much--

9 CASSANDRA SMITH: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --and  
11 congratulations, I know you're a recent mom--

12 CASSANDRA SMITH: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --first  
14 Mother's Day--

15 CASSANDRA SMITH: Thank you, which  
16 actually--

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --and I--

18 CASSANDRA SMITH: --means I have to  
19 go.

20 [Laughter]

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --I wanted to  
22 just ask, I know that we take tours as government  
23 officials, but do you give tours open GMDC  
24 facilities--

25 CASSANDRA SMITH: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --for tours?

3 CASSANDRA SMITH: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Do you  
5 participate in a citywide campaign or is this just  
6 GMDC providing what would be an open design  
7 production tour for the public?

8 CASSANDRA SMITH: We do both, we do  
9 a lot of tours. You know, groups approach us,  
10 students, economic development interest groups,  
11 and things like that and we're always open to  
12 tours with those groups. So what we do less of,  
13 which we are open to doing more of, is our open  
14 house and open studio kind of tours. Our tenants  
15 have organized themselves and we've actually,  
16 through our involvement with the working group,  
17 have done an open house New York tour. But we  
18 think that there's, you know, plenty of room to do  
19 more, I mean, there's so much going on in our  
20 areas in North Brooklyn that we really do need to  
21 wrap ourselves in more to get people right up to  
22 the top of Greenpoint. And so, yeah, it's  
23 definitely something that we would like to do more  
24 of.

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you.

1 Maria.

2 MARIA BAUMAN: Hello everybody.

3 First, we just want to say really thank you for  
4 creating this forum. You have been hard at work  
5 and so have we and this is really the fruit of a  
6 long labor.  
7

8 My name is Maria Bauman, I am  
9 Director of Education and Community Engagement for  
10 Urban Bush Women and we are proud members of the  
11 Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts Working  
12 Group and, yes, I have worked with El Puente and  
13 in Williamsburg, I see Council Member Reyna.

14 Urban Bush Women, just to give you  
15 a little context, we're located in Fort Greene,  
16 Brooklyn, and we seek to bring the untold and  
17 under told stories and histories of  
18 disenfranchised people to light through dance. We  
19 do this from a woman-centered perspective and as  
20 members of the African Diaspora community in order  
21 to create a more equitable balance of power in the  
22 dance world and beyond.

23 We are uniquely positioned in that  
24 we are a New York-based touring organization,  
25 we're a performing arts organization which tours

2 nationally and internationally, we represented--we  
3 were one of a few groups who represented the  
4 United States on a U.S. State Department tour of  
5 South America recently, and yet, we also work with  
6 our neighbors in Fort Greene to co-produce an  
7 annual Juneteenth celebration, which is a place  
8 based in Cuyler Gore Park, celebrating the receipt  
9 of the news of the emancipation of slaves in the  
10 United States in Texas.

11 We also work with NYCHA sites in  
12 our neighborhood. We're a founding member of  
13 Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance and are currently  
14 co-curating with Downtown Brooklyn Partnership  
15 dance groups in our neighborhood. And so we sort  
16 of have our feet in two ponds. And what we posit  
17 is that all art is culturally specific, from  
18 ballet, which has its roots in Italian Renaissance  
19 courts, to opera, 17th century Europe, to stepping  
20 exhibitions, which of course, hails from South  
21 African miners, to abstract expressionist  
22 painting, which is an American post-World War II  
23 movement. And so placing cultures, racial, and  
24 ethnic groups on any kind of hierarchy is really  
25 not the intention nor the role of any policymaker

nor practitioner.

The Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts Working Group of New York names equity as a value. New York residents who are diverse regarding geography, ethnicity, and their approach to citizenship must have equitable access to outlets of recognition and branding, equitable access to funding and space allocation in order to thrive and drive the economic and cultural vitality of our neighborhoods.

We encourage an expanded definition of economic activity, including the small business role that arts groups play to sustain the local economy. Urban Bush Women, we recently hosted a team of about 40 students and their teachers from the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy in South Africa, their dancers came to study with us. And soon, we'll host a similar group from Fort Bend Arts Academy in Texas.

May I proceed? I can be quick. Thank you. We'll soon host a similar group from Texas. And when we do that, our dual identity as an internationally recognized performance group and a Brooklyn-based art for social change

1  
2 advocate helps us really drive tourism to our  
3 neighboring institutions, such as MoCADA and Cake  
4 Man Raven.

5                   We really do encourage agencies,  
6 such as DCA, Public Health, Transportation, Small  
7 Business Services, and City Planning, to come  
8 together because we don't parse the way that we  
9 live as city residents. Again, in June, we'll co-  
10 produce Juneteenth, we'll be in Missouri  
11 representing ourselves at a conference there.  
12 We'll be reviewing our work with the Cultural  
13 Alliance of Greater Birmingham on using art and  
14 dialogue as unifying and equalizing underpinnings  
15 for addressing the history of racism there. So we  
16 really look at our role as artists holistically  
17 and we encourage city agencies to work together in  
18 a holistic way as well.

19                   And finally, I will just say that  
20 of course the use of space is of utmost importance  
21 to us, even with all of the space allocation that  
22 is currently available, performing and dance  
23 organizations are often left out simply because of  
24 our unique needs as far as music, sound  
25 ordinances, and also particular types of flooring.

2 And so of course, rent stabilization, rent to own  
3 properties, and mixed use buildings are of  
4 significant importance to us, and so we urge  
5 policies that encourage mixed use and conducive to  
6 arts use space.

7 And we thank you for the work that  
8 you're doing, and we're honored to be here today.

9 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: Hi, good  
10 afternoon now. Thank you, again, Council Members  
11 Reyna and Van Bramer, for, you know, allowing this  
12 wonderful, robust conversation. My name is Kellie  
13 Terry-Sepulveda, I'm Executive Director of the  
14 Point Community Development Corporation in Hunts  
15 Point, and I'm so proud to be here with all of  
16 these colleagues, and sort of a newcomer to  
17 testifying, you know, in issues related to the  
18 importance of culture. You know, usually we're  
19 here talking about environmental justice, but, you  
20 know, actually we represent a lot of us that do a  
21 cross intersection of this work.

22 And sort of what I want to add  
23 today, I'm probably not even going to look at my  
24 testimony, you know, it's like preaching to the  
25 choir, after hearing you all speak, I feel like

2 you have a really robust understanding of the work  
3 ahead. I just hope to sort of add some stuff.

4           And I think some of the things that  
5 we're looking to emphasize is really the lifeline  
6 that the cultural and arts sector provide to  
7 communities like Hunts Point. You know, that, you  
8 know, we share, you know, a lot of the same issues  
9 with many marginalized, underserved communities,  
10 and so what happens with us is that we're  
11 overwhelmed in many cases with many, you know,  
12 challenges to overcome at once. And so I want to  
13 point out that, for us, neighborhoods like us,  
14 arts and culture is not just an end, it's actually  
15 a means, right, to, you know, addressing systemic  
16 issues of poverty, class inequity, and all of  
17 those long-term things. And so, you know, to that  
18 end, we really do want to support this ongoing  
19 conversation and integration of, you know, these  
20 approaches into policymaking, and I think that  
21 this is such a great step towards that.

22           I also want to add that we want to  
23 work to enhance the connections of resources to  
24 overburdened and marginalized communities in a way  
25 that's intentional and, you know, we talked about

2 a little bit, you know, the power of, you know,  
3 reducing bureaucracy and things like that, and  
4 also the importance of inviting maybe  
5 nontraditionally, culturally oriented actors to  
6 come to this table of power.

7 You know, one thing I can think  
8 about is, you know, the great work with No Longer  
9 Empty, I hope you do get up there to the Bronx.  
10 The other part of that is that that's actually--

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

12 [Interposing] I just want to clarify, I have been  
13 to the Bronx--

14 [Laughter]

15 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA:

16 [Interposing] Oh, no, I'm sorry, to there. No, of  
17 course, of course.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, I was  
19 thinking about that even before you said that  
20 'cause I was saying--I was going to actually tell  
21 you when you finished, you know, that I love  
22 BAAD!, and--

23 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: Oh, yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --I'm an  
25 old friend of Charles Rice-Gonzalez--

2 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: Great.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and I  
4 love Arthur, so I've actually been there and--

5 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA:  
6 [Interposing] Yeah, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to--

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, no,  
8 no, no. Just so anyone else that I've been to the  
9 Bronx.

10 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA:  
11 [Interposing] I know, you probably can show me a  
12 few places so--

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

14 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: --we'll  
15 need to trade resources but--

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Exactly.

17 KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: --you  
18 know, just in terms of that, but just also to  
19 mention that a nonprofit organization, Mid-Bronx  
20 Senior Citizens Council, that has been working to  
21 try and figure out how to place the Andrew  
22 Freedman home, which No Longer Empty's  
23 collaboration has really brought to light. And so  
24 things like that are great and, you know, what we  
25 want to see is that sustained attention that after

2 No Longer Empty is--you know, so we're thinking  
3 about the after and how to create a sustained way  
4 to have those things happen on a continuous basis.

5 One thing I would be remiss if I  
6 don't focus on because that was my duty here  
7 today, as a youth service agency is to really, you  
8 know, look at the importance of protecting summer  
9 youth employment funding and also to really  
10 heighten the role of arts service organizations  
11 that use arts and culture, like I said, as a means  
12 and not an end. I mean, the shows and the gallery  
13 shows and the products are wonderful, but, you  
14 know, the point of, you know, ICP at the Point  
15 program necessarily isn't to create masterpieces,  
16 although that's what happens when you connect to  
17 these young people who are so brilliant to  
18 opportunity, but, you know, really the long-term,  
19 the end game, okay, is to really create a more  
20 diverse representation in all of the cultural  
21 sectors that were represented here today. You  
22 know, with creating that pipeline of our young  
23 people to connecting them to these opportunities.  
24 And so, you know, as one critical component, you  
25 know, I do want to emphasize that.

2 And just, you know, really when  
3 you're fighting for preserving those cuts, which I  
4 know you do every single year, you know, what  
5 you're doing is a matter of life and death in many  
6 instances and I really have to bring the  
7 seriousness to the table today. You know, last  
8 summer and spring, I attended three funerals of  
9 young people that had been engaged, you know, in a  
10 more productive way, probably wouldn't have been  
11 where they were, you know, in that situation and  
12 in growing--you know, a kid growing up in  
13 Highbridge, understanding that the difference  
14 between, you know, being really successful and,  
15 you know, falling into a pitfall is like this,  
16 it's like this. And there are more opportunities  
17 to do something that's negative and detrimental,  
18 unfortunately, in our neighborhoods and  
19 neighborhoods like ours than it is to do something  
20 that's productive. And so I want to sort of lend  
21 that narrative to this and, you know, really  
22 emphasize the importance of preserving  
23 institutions like ours that--and also promoting  
24 just a strategic planning and integration of this  
25 kind of voice into the larger cultural realm when

1 we're talking.

2 And so that's about it with that.

3 I want thank you and look forward to working with  
4 you in the future on all of this.

5 [Pause]

6 VERDERY ROOSEVELT: ...And thank you  
7 for this opportunity to testify today. My name is  
8 Verdery Roosevelt and I direct the cultural  
9 division of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone,  
10 known as UMEZ.

11 As you know, UMEZ was created to  
12 revitalize the economy of Upper Manhattan through  
13 job creation, corporate alliances, strategic  
14 investments, and small business assistance. Since  
15 2004, UMEZ has placed arts and culture at the  
16 heart of its nonprofit investment strategy. By  
17 strengthening the cultural industry in Upper  
18 Manhattan, we have been working to reposition the  
19 area as one of New York's primary cultural  
20 destinations and, thereby, generate a dynamic  
21 environment for the many small businesses in the  
22 zone. I'd like to give you a few examples of the  
23 successful relationships we've nurtured between  
24 our small businesses and our cultural  
25

2 organizations.

3 The prime example is 125th Street  
4 where you'll find the Apollo Theater, Studio  
5 Museum, Romare Bearden Foundation, the Dwyer  
6 Cultural Center, Jazzmobile, and the Mama  
7 Foundation. Just down the street is the historic  
8 Victoria Theater. Soon to come is 125th Street  
9 Firehouse, the home of the Caribbean Cultural  
10 Center. And finally, the National Jazz Museum in  
11 Harlem will make its new home on the Mart125 site  
12 across from the Apollo.

13 On the same blocks, you'll find  
14 Harlem's restaurants--the Red Rooster and the  
15 charming Chez Lucienne right next door. I can  
16 tell you from personal experience that on the  
17 night Ballet Hispanico performed for the first  
18 time at the Apollo, both restaurants were packed  
19 with Ballet Hispanico fans before and after the  
20 show. By the way, this natural cultural district  
21 on 125 Street is now an official one. UMEZ worked  
22 closely with the city's Department of Planning to  
23 rezone these blocks as the arts and entertainment  
24 sub-district.

25 Another example, in East Harlem

1 last spring, a group of 11 arts organizations  
2 partnered with 34 small businesses throughout the  
3 neighborhood to create a self-directed tour guide  
4 to all of the participants, together with a book  
5 of discount coupons to lure shoppers to those  
6 businesses.  
7

8 In Washington Heights, Vantage  
9 Properties real estate firm allowed local artists  
10 to run a pop-up bookstore in an empty storefront  
11 on Broadway for a month as part of the Uptown Art  
12 Stroll last June. It drew so much traffic that  
13 the local arts service organization signed a lease  
14 with Vantage that would allow this volunteer  
15 effort to continue.

16 East Harlem Business Capital Corp  
17 sponsors banners that feature prominent local  
18 figures from the neighborhood as a way of defining  
19 a distinctive profile for that area.

20 The 125th Street BID does the same,  
21 with local businesses sponsoring the winning  
22 designs created by local artists. The new  
23 Frederick Douglass Boulevard BID is using music as  
24 a lure to encourage citywide participation in  
25 their marketing initiative this weekend.

2 It's wonderful to see this meeting  
3 today between Small Business and Cultural Affairs  
4 Committees. We support your work, and ask us  
5 anything that we can do to help you, we'd be happy  
6 to.

7 RYAN GILLIAM: Good afternoon,  
8 thank you, thank you so much for having this.

9 I'm Ryan Gilliam, I'm a theater  
10 director and playwright, and for the past 16  
11 years, I've also been a community-based artist,  
12 working with youth ages 12 to 19 in the East  
13 Village and Lower East Side. And my organization,  
14 Downtown Art, is a small nonprofit based on East  
15 4th Street, and I'm one of the artists of FABnyc.

16 And when we founded that, we were  
17 there to try and protect our homes because we  
18 thought we were all losing them, the  
19 gentrification in our neighborhood was extreme.  
20 And we are a group of 12 or 13 small and diverse  
21 arts organization that we're hoping to hold on.

22 Our story ended up being a happy  
23 one in that we were able to stay and we actually  
24 became property owners. And FAB itself went on to  
25 grow and take on other roles.

2 And I just want to speak a little  
3 bit as an artist and running a very small  
4 grassroots nonprofit, what FAB has meant to my  
5 organization. And so two weeks ago, 25 teenagers  
6 and I opened The Bowery Wars, which is an original  
7 music theater work which we perform outdoors in  
8 the streets, parks, and vacant lots of the Lower  
9 East Side. And FABnyc has supported that project  
10 in a number of ways--they reached out, for  
11 instance, to leaders of a new local park and  
12 connected us so that we could get clearance to go  
13 in and do part of our performance there. They  
14 have blogged, posted photos, they have quadrupled  
15 my outreach through their use of their website,  
16 through eblasts, their social media, and they've  
17 even reached out to local press and got us a  
18 little feature in the first print edition of the  
19 Lo-Down, which is a local magazine. They just  
20 also brainstormed with me so over any kind of  
21 problems, small and large, so they were kind of  
22 like a staff that I don't have in terms of being  
23 able to think with people about how to overcome  
24 different kinds of difficulties. And I don't know  
25 if you can totally appreciate this the way that I

2 do, but they've also purchased full-price tickets  
3 to come see my show on their days off.

4 But FAB's impact doesn't really  
5 just stop there with those kinds of actions. As  
6 part of FAB, we've strengthened our ties to other  
7 local cultural groups. And last fall, for  
8 instance, when we were desperately in need of  
9 rehearsal space because our project is in a very  
10 long renovation process, three other FAB groups  
11 came to our rescue and gave us either low cost or  
12 free space to help get us through in the past few  
13 months, when one of the FAB buildings, a new  
14 studio opened up and we have been given now a home  
15 to last us until our future home is ready, again,  
16 at a very modest rent to bridge us through.

17 At the opening celebrations, we had  
18 FAB members there to and, one, the director of a  
19 group called Teatro Circulo, pulled me over to  
20 tell me that, because his group had just gotten a  
21 recent grant, they were going to donate \$30,000  
22 worth of lighting equipment to our new home.

23 We didn't have these kinds of  
24 relationships prior to FAB, and these are deeply  
25 meaningful ways in which we're able to sustain

2 ourselves. Some of the other things that  
3 happened, briefly, are that we have a café on the  
4 block and everybody passes through--the visitors,  
5 the residents, the workers--so we have a place  
6 that we can actually socially mingle because  
7 sometimes it's not so easy to do that with workers  
8 and residents in the same neighborhood.

9                   When we're not using our studio,  
10 FAB is renting it out to young choreographers and  
11 they're taking care of all the business end of  
12 doing that so that, since I don't have a staff  
13 that can do that, we work together. That way,  
14 that space doesn't go underutilized, right, and  
15 empty when I'm not able to use it.

16                   These are just a few of the  
17 examples that I wanted to give about the impact  
18 that it has for me, as an artist, and for my  
19 organization in the neighborhood.

20                   [Pause]

21                   CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That was  
22 beautiful, it really was very moving to hear you  
23 talk about that in the way that you did, so thank  
24 you for that. Reminding us of the human piece in  
25 all of this, it's just really, really important,

so I really appreciate that.

And I don't know if we have questions so much as just thank you. And, Maria, right? I don't think we've met yet, but you are universally loved because when you started testifying, someone in the audience texted me, she's wonderful, we love her. And then right about that same time, Chairwoman Reyna whispers to me, I love her. So you must be pretty fabulous yourself.

MARIA BAUMAN: We're all running the same race.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, no, it's great. And, Kellie, you'll send my regards to the Bronx, right?

And--

KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: See you at the Andrew Freedman home.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: There you go.

KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: Get you a brand--

[Crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER:

1 [Interposing] Yes, no pressure, right? No  
2 pressure. It ends June 5th, right? But true  
3 story actually, my first partner lived in the  
4 Belmont section of the Bronx. Yes, I am bringing  
5 up my ex.  
6

7 [Laughter]

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 FEMALE VOICE: --house?

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's  
12 that?

13 [Off mic]

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's  
15 right, that's right, so I spent a significant  
16 amount of time there until that relationship went  
17 down the tubes, but--

18 [Laughter]

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --I don't  
20 hold that against the Bronx. No, no, no, no. And  
21 last time I told that story, which actually was in  
22 the Bronx at the New York Botanical Garden, a  
23 woman, the president of the board, actually came  
24 up to me and she's like, I hope you've had better  
25 luck in love since then, so I feel the need to say

I'm getting married on July 28th.

[Applause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So yeah,  
yeah, yeah, yes.

KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA: Well if  
you need an after-party--

[background noise]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you,  
that's a very generous offer. And I just want to  
say I've been to the Dwyer Cultural Center, which  
is a wonderful place, and the Red Rooster is an  
awful lot of fun as well, I got to say. That's a  
lot of fun.

So thank you, right?

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: You've said it  
all.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: All right.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Whoo, it's  
therapy session.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And now we  
will call our final panel of the day, David  
Strauss from the Queens Museum; Sheila Lewandowski  
from the Chocolate Factory; Melanie Franklin Cohn  
from the Council on the Arts and Humanities for

1 Staten Island, Staten Island in the house;  
2 Michelle Proffit, Art Home. Is Michelle still  
3 here? That's a great last name, Proffit. Lynda  
4 Herndon, who--

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Queens.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --just  
7 walked in, yes, Queens Symphony.

8 FEMALE VOICE: In the other room.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, okay.

10 And the--so you've heard the whole story about the  
11 ex and everything like that, and Rasu Jilani, Rasu  
12 Jilani from Pratt Center for Community  
13 Development. Not sure we have the maximum amount  
14 of chairs there, but you'll pass the mic, yeah,  
15 you'll just circle around, thank you. We're good.  
16 So, David, why don't you begin and then we will--

17 DAVID STRAUSS: [Interposing] I'll  
18 begin, okay, I'll thank Councilwoman Reyna later  
19 for hosting this, but I also want to thank you  
20 both and the rest of the Council for fighting as  
21 staunchly as you have over the years to restore  
22 cultural funding, and I know we're engaged in  
23 another fight right now.

24 Moving on though, I'm going to skip  
25

1 everything that's in this because you know it all,  
2 the truth is I'm here as the bridge between the  
3 NOCD and the CIG, the Cultural Institutions Group,  
4 to speak about what the Queens Museum is doing to--  
5 -I play a few different roles in the lives of  
6 different small nonprofit small businesses, arts  
7 groups.  
8

9 The first and most common is  
10 obviously the direct trickle down. You know, we  
11 have events, we use local eateries, we don't have  
12 Marcus Samuelson or Danny Boulud, no problem, we  
13 have Torilleria Nixtamal in Corona, we have--

14 [Crosstalk]

15 DAVID STRAUSS: Right, Deli Palace-

16 -

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah,  
18 yeah, yeah.

19 DAVID STRAUSS: --and a number of  
20 other places. We use local vendors, we use local  
21 lumber yards, we don't go to Home Depot. We try  
22 to keep things in the community.

23 Secondly, we're drawing people from  
24 all over the city, all over the world to  
25 neighborhoods they probably wouldn't visit if the

2 cultural hub wasn't in Flushing Meadows Corona  
3 Park with our other institutions, they're then  
4 going back into the community, into Corona, and  
5 they're taking, I guess, adventures that they  
6 necessarily wouldn't have taken.

7 Which leads me to my next thing,  
8 which is an eight year old initiative which  
9 started with Mike Hickey, thank you for your  
10 funding back in your Deutsche Bank days. This is  
11 one of those endeavors that you set out on with a  
12 highest of expectations and then you fail  
13 miserably. This was the invention of the Queens  
14 Culture Trolley, which was a cultural tourism  
15 initiative that was intended to bring people who  
16 hadn't been to all of the different Queens  
17 neighborhoods out to see what they could discover  
18 by stopping at different cultural institutions,  
19 commercial hubs, the different worlds that exist  
20 within the borough. What we realized very soon  
21 after launching it was that, while we were great  
22 at putting our community organizers on the streets  
23 and meeting the local business folks and community  
24 leaders, we were terrible at running the  
25 transportation system. We're an art museum and we

2 learned that quickly.

3                   However, after the folding of the  
4 trolley, we re-evolved and put our energies as an  
5 art museum into being the nexus for the business  
6 community, the cultural community, the schools,  
7 churches, everything in Corona to see what they  
8 needed. They hadn't been asked a lot of questions  
9 about what they thought was wrong, and we as a  
10 community leader ourselves felt that we had the  
11 connections to prompt that conversation. We  
12 focused on Corona Plaza, a once grand and not so  
13 grand anymore center of activity, and we set up a  
14 lot of activities there. We did street fairs, we  
15 did beatification projects, and working with your  
16 colleague, Councilwoman Ferreras, we are now in  
17 the middle of working to get DOT Plaza program to  
18 stretch out into this.

19                   We've worked with Jose Serrano,  
20 you're in the back there, our community organizer,  
21 is on staff, one of two, has been pounding the  
22 pavement with, you know, the business owners to  
23 see what they need out of the plaza, include them  
24 in the plaza design program. If it ever moves  
25 forward, I think we're going to have one of the

2 most collaboratively built projects that's going  
3 to, you know, create a lot--thank you--create a  
4 lot of activity within the plaza and then bring  
5 people in and build a sense of community pride  
6 that I think is lacking.

7           Beyond that, I wanted to talk about  
8 something which I think is also germane, which is  
9 Ridgewood, Queens, which many people in the fine  
10 districts represented here, people think is  
11 actually part of Bushwick, Brooklyn, a little  
12 cooler than Ridgewood, Queens, I guess to most  
13 people, but not to the Queens Museum of Art.  
14 Tomorrow we are leading an art crawl, we're  
15 bringing hundreds of people into Ridgewood to see  
16 what exactly is going on there. We're starting at  
17 the Onderdonk House, this wonderful historic spot,  
18 and then we're going to nine different studios,  
19 galleries, and really trying to open up people's  
20 consciousness, and that's the museum acting as a  
21 cheerleader for our own borough trying to set  
22 something straight about the borough wars, the  
23 border line, and all that, and a way for us to use  
24 our reach. You know, there's an article in  
25 today's Daily News that, you know, a lot of the

2 smaller galleries in Ridgewood probably wouldn't  
3 get, but since the Queens Museum is behind this  
4 effort, we're able to do that. If you want to  
5 come and join, it's 3 p.m. at the Onderdonk House.

6 There are other things, I know that  
7 Councilwoman Chin mentioned something about  
8 distribution of local artisans. The Queens Museum  
9 realizing there's fantastic talent throughout the  
10 borough has created the Made in Queens initiative  
11 where you have all the artisans represented in our  
12 museum shop and we hope to expand that so that  
13 only that stuff is in our museum shop and not of  
14 the other kitsch that actually makes us money.

15 But one of the other things we're  
16 doing is that we're opening our space for free to  
17 other arts groups. So Topaz, a fantastic group in  
18 Woodside, has a dance residency program that  
19 utilizes our galleries for rehearsal space. We  
20 welcome in the Ecuadorian Chamber of Commerce to  
21 have their meetings in our space. Stuff like  
22 that, it is really building into the relationship  
23 within culture and, you know, big culture like the  
24 CIG, smaller culture like Topaz, independent  
25 artists who are independent businessmen and women,

2 gallerists, and really trying to create a  
3 symbiotic relationship between all these different  
4 sectors.

5 And now over to you. Thank you.  
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I just want to  
8 take this moment to say thank you for the art  
9 crawl you're going to be--

10 DAVID STRAUSS: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --spearheading  
12 tomorrow and--

13 [Crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --it's great  
15 that it's happening, unfortunately, I won't be  
16 there, I'm taking my kids camping for Mother's Day  
17 weekend, but I'm looking forward to that. But I  
18 want to make sure that that continues.

19 DAVID STRAUSS: It will, it will.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And it's funny  
21 that you've mentioned that at the Onderdonk House  
22 you're going to start there--

23 [crosstalk]

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --the rich  
25 history the Onderdonk House has, and the artist

1  
2 flavor that's really taking to adopting the  
3 Onderdonk House, it's going to be going under  
4 renovations for its roof that I funded to make  
5 sure that we preserve it. But Ridgewood as a  
6 whole is a national, state, and city landmarked  
7 community and it was featured in This Old House--

8 [Crosstalk]

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --which we're  
10 very proud of as well. So I hope you can include  
11 all of that--

12 DAVID STRAUSS: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --and visit the  
14 Myrtle Avenue BID with your tour group--

15 DAVID STRAUSS: Okay.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --to be able to  
17 create that synergy that we're so forward looking  
18 to see and grow so that it's a mutual benefit to  
19 the art world, as well as the business community.  
20 Thank you.

21 DAVID STRAUSS: Absolutely, thank  
22 you.

23 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Good  
24 afternoon, thank you, Chairwoman and Chairman and  
25 everyone else. I don't have my written testimony

2 because my printer would not function this  
3 morning, so I apologize for that, so I have lots  
4 of notes.

5 But I'm going to jump to comments  
6 to a lot of what happened today because I really  
7 support most of the points that I'm going to say  
8 naked because we're okay with naked at the  
9 Chocolate Factory.

10 [Off mic]

11 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you. At  
12 some--

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: The  
14 Chocolate Factory I was referring to.

15 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: I won't tell  
16 Dan. But--

17 [Crosstalk]

18 SHEILA LEWANDOWSKI: --but a couple  
19 of things I put down, one is thank you for  
20 fighting to save DCA's funding and increase it, I  
21 didn't want to leave that out.

22 There's a lot of talk today about  
23 temporary spaces and one of the things I wanted to  
24 stress is there's a real need for permanent and  
25 semi-permanent spaces because artists need to be

2 able to move in and be in those spaces for a year  
3 to two years to really fully develop, especially  
4 if you're talking about artisans. A woodworker  
5 needs to bring in machinery, they cannot come in  
6 and out in three months or--in a temporary space.

7 So one of the things I've spoken to  
8 a number of people about is the potential for some  
9 type of live work zoning that's, you know, to  
10 recognize artists and artisans as manufacturers so  
11 they, you know, we have that kind of permission or  
12 semi-permanent spaces, give incentives to  
13 developers to include that in their development.

14 The other things is with your  
15 council, which I love the idea, including  
16 nonprofits and artists on that council I think is  
17 really important. And on BID boards, in our own  
18 neighborhood as much as there are things I love  
19 about what was BDC BID and now is partnership,  
20 they have not been accessible from the artists and  
21 most small businesses. Most small businesses have  
22 struggled and so us, like the Queens Museum of Art  
23 and some of the other cultural folks here and FAB,  
24 we've kind of stepped in and played a role working  
25 with small businesses on all types of activities,

2 including the Taste of LIC on Tuesday, June 5th,  
3 that our MC, Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, will  
4 be welcoming you all at. But that's actually an  
5 economic and a business development project that  
6 we've initiated as a cultural group, but we don't  
7 have access to economic development or community  
8 development funds, we only have access to arts  
9 funds, even though we're doing those activities.

10 So one other thing came up recently  
11 I want to keep my eye on is garbage tax, don't  
12 want it 'cause that actually is a tax in addition  
13 to the payroll taxes we pay, the MTA surcharges we  
14 pay, the real estate taxes we pay because us, like  
15 most nonprofits rent, so we do pay taxes, yet we  
16 don't have access to the SBS activities, even  
17 though we are contributing to the tax base.

18 Sorry. I had stop shoplifting the  
19 talent. Let's see. So I think I've kind of hit  
20 on most of the things. The SBS, Council Member  
21 Chin, you know, said the thing about us paying  
22 taxes and I agree with, that's what I said. The  
23 artists need to be included in a lot of this  
24 discussion, not just the nonprofits, and that's  
25 the studio space. CDP, sorry, Mike, you brought

2 it up. Everything you said, I agree with. It is  
3 taking resources away from the arts, artists and  
4 the arts groups, much needed resources that is not  
5 required of any other government contracting in  
6 the same way, even though we have to do VENDEX as  
7 well, so I would love to see that restructured.

8 NYC & Company, I have lots of  
9 things to say about NYC & Company, but there's  
10 opportunity, I think they could restructure.  
11 They've been around a long time, maybe they need  
12 to undergo a strategic planning process where they  
13 include more of the real New York. They stopped  
14 being--Applebee's should not be on the front page  
15 of NYC & Company, it just shouldn't be. It should  
16 be much more made in New York, made here, there's  
17 five boroughs. So I mean, they have an  
18 opportunity and they are a public service, so how  
19 do we open it up to make it more of a public  
20 service.

21 So thank you, and postcards are  
22 here for your view.

23 [Off mic]

24 MELANIE FRANKLIN COHN: Good  
25 afternoon, I'm Melanie Franklin Cohn, the

2 Executive Director of the Council on the Arts and  
3 Humanities for Staten Island and I'm a member of  
4 the Naturally Occurring Cultural District Working  
5 Group, and I also want to share my thanks for  
6 having us here today and also for all of the work  
7 you do on behalf of the cultural organizations in  
8 New York City and in Staten Island, in particular.

9           Staten Island has been growing  
10 rapidly, by about 24% since 1990. The population  
11 growth has led to an influx of new faces who are  
12 creating a diverse cultural scene. Although these  
13 artists and heritage bearers, which I mean  
14 individuals who are preserving and sharing their  
15 cultural heritage and sharing it with the next  
16 generation, they come from diverse backgrounds--  
17 immigrants from Mexico, Sri Lanka, Liberia,  
18 transplants from across the U.S.--they all have a  
19 common goal: To share their art forms and  
20 cultural expressions with their community.

21 Unfortunately, Staten Island's cultural  
22 infrastructure has not kept pace with its growth,  
23 and there are few places to present their work.

24           And one solution is to bring these  
25 artists and heritage bearers into public, city-

2 owned spaces. This not only allows artists a  
3 space to present their work, but it brings  
4 liveliness to public areas and it offers great  
5 accessibility to events, to even casual passersby  
6 who might not have known about them otherwise.

7 We've had great success in this--  
8 from LUMEN, which is a one-night video and  
9 performance art festival that attracts over 2,000  
10 people to Staten Island, which was held last year  
11 at the city-owned former Third District Lighthouse  
12 Depot, to St. George Day, which is a community-  
13 organized festival that included a Dragon Parade,  
14 which was held last month at Tompkinsville Park.

15 These successes are why providing  
16 access to public spaces is so important, but for  
17 small art groups, for individual artists, for our  
18 heritage bearers who are particularly for artists  
19 who don't have English as a first language, these  
20 permissions, contracting, permitting what's  
21 necessary to access these public owned spaces can  
22 be formidable. Simply finding out what city  
23 agency needs to be contacted for permission and  
24 what paperwork is necessary can be very difficult  
25 for those who have never gone through the process

2 before and these complexities can make the use of  
3 many public spaces out of reach for artists and  
4 for immigrant groups. That's why I support city  
5 efforts that help streamline and guide artists and  
6 heritage bearers through the process and provide  
7 financial support.

8 A great example of how this can be  
9 accomplished on a proactive city level is the  
10 Department of Transportation's Urban Art Program.  
11 This program allows artists a streamlined way to  
12 work with DOT to use public plazas, sidewalks, and  
13 other DOT spaces as canvases for temporary art in  
14 all five boroughs. The DOT's pARTners program  
15 even offers up to \$5,000 for the installation and  
16 creation of work, and they assist with press  
17 releases to help market the productions once  
18 they're complete.

19 We have worked with DOT on a  
20 temporary project that happened at the Ferry  
21 Terminal with an artist, Victoria Munro, from  
22 Staten Island. It would have been impossible ten  
23 years ago--I say this from experience, I worked at  
24 the [background noise] museum and it was  
25 impossible to work with DOT ten years ago, but

1 it's possible and pleasant now.

2  
3 And so I just want to say just to  
4 kind of finish up that creating streamlined ways  
5 that artists and heritage bearers can bring these  
6 extraordinary art experiences to life in public  
7 spaces is vital to the synergy that exists between  
8 community artists and community businesses. It's  
9 why I'm here today is to encourage the City  
10 Council to find ways to help facilitate community-  
11 based cultural projects in public spaces.

12 [Pause]

13 LYNDA HERNDON: Yes. Hi, thank you  
14 for having me, I appreciate you allowing me to  
15 come in and to speak on behalf of Queens Symphony  
16 Orchestra. I am the Executive Director and Queens  
17 Symphony Orchestra is the only professional  
18 orchestra in the borough of Queens. We're 59-  
19 years old, but we have a challenge in that we're  
20 not a CIG, so we're not able to tap into those  
21 amounts of fundings and it's always based on  
22 programming. And those funds have continued to  
23 dwindle and, as we try to get new corporate and  
24 new foundation, those are not, you know, the buzz  
25 word anymore isn't arts anymore, it's other

2 things--urban development, other things.

3 So we looked several years ago  
4 about how do we turn this crisis of the economy  
5 and losing funding into an opportunity, and we  
6 came back as an organization and said we still  
7 want to serve the borough and what we're doing and  
8 even more, but with less money. Unable to do  
9 that, we said that we're going to change from  
10 being a typical orchestra structure of being a  
11 subscription series, you come to concerts, you pay  
12 for your tickets, and we said we're going to  
13 create a festival and we want to do this because  
14 we want to brand and institutionalize Queens  
15 Symphony and show our value to the landscape, but  
16 more importantly, we want to have this festival in  
17 spring become a catalyst for every year you come  
18 to Queens, you come in Kennedy Airport, you come  
19 into LaGuardia in Queens, you don't need to get a  
20 taxi. In Queens, we have so many diverse ethnic  
21 groups, so many different cultural groups to go  
22 to.

23 So this year we had our first  
24 annual QSO Arts and Music Festival. It was for  
25 two weeks in April and we had for the first year,

2 over 72 other arts cultural groups participating  
3 with over 50 events. It was a huge success, I got  
4 some media sponsor, I had some other sponsors.  
5 But to make this go forward, it's expensive. You  
6 know, ourselves and Queens Symphony, we did three  
7 free concerts in three different venues--Jamaica  
8 Performing Arts Center, Flushing Town Hall, and  
9 then Queens College Kupferberg Center--and that's  
10 a start.

11 And when I say partnerships, true  
12 partnerships, we both, you know, covered costs, we  
13 marketed it together, and just we find as an arts  
14 group the survival moving forward is in  
15 collaboration, not only in where we perform, we've  
16 also collaborated with the library, for the past  
17 three years, we've been doing an educational  
18 lecture series for families at different libraries  
19 in different branches, we've had branch in your  
20 district and in your district, and we hope to do  
21 more of this, and we work collaboratively with the  
22 library.

23 We've been working now with  
24 Kupferberg Center. I just was able to get Queens  
25 Symphony to move on campus, we're now in the

2 Dining Hall building at Queens College as of last  
3 April, and that was a huge coup for us because it  
4 formed more partnerships for us to do more  
5 collaborative partnerships and concerts. They now  
6 have taken over our youth program, so it's part of  
7 their Revelations program. So, again, we're  
8 discovering the more that we reach out to the  
9 other arts groups, the other institutions, you  
10 know, we have to use these venues since we don't  
11 have our own home, that's really the way in moving  
12 forward.

13           And so the next step for us is that  
14 we need the assistance in small businesses, in the  
15 bigger corporations to help to be sponsors for  
16 this festival. You know, if you give money to  
17 this festival, it's not just Queens Symphony three  
18 free concerts, it's, you know, hopefully, over 100  
19 different cultural groups doing over 100 events in  
20 two weeks. And part of that marketing that we do  
21 is we include them also on our website, we link  
22 their website, we do Facebook, we do Twitter,  
23 that's on all year.

24           So my plea I guess to this  
25 Committee is to help us as a small organization

2 that's not a CIG, that's cultural to get the small  
3 businesses and get the corporations to help to  
4 give us funding or help to find new sources  
5 besides government that, you know, we can move  
6 forward and continue to do this work and even  
7 more.

8 Thank you.

9 RASU JILANI: Thank you, Committee.

10 My name is Rasu Jilani, I am the Consulting Arts  
11 cotermin [phonetic] Sustainability Project Manager  
12 at Pratt Center.

13 Pratt Center, generally, is a urban  
14 planning institution and they hired me last year  
15 to come in and assist them with getting a lot of  
16 their ideas of arts and cultural events out of the  
17 meeting room into the streets. I am a native of  
18 Brooklyn, New York, and been doing social and arts  
19 pretty much activism for the last five years.  
20 They heard about my work and brought me in to help  
21 them out.

22 So the work that I do at Pratt  
23 Center pretty much is funded by the Rockefeller  
24 Foundation Cultural Innovation Fund. I do have a  
25 testimony here, but I think what has come out of

2 this project in terms of some of the issues that I  
3 have seen from working on the ground level has  
4 really, I think is really is more important than  
5 just reading a testimony.

6 For the most part, the project has  
7 allowed me to collaborate with institutions such  
8 as Bed-Stuy Restoration Corporation, we call it  
9 Restoration Plaza in Brooklyn. Also, Cypress  
10 Hills Local Development Corporation and Arts East  
11 New York, which is a startup organization.

12 These institutions within central  
13 Brooklyn predominantly deals with retrofitting  
14 and, you know, urban planning and community  
15 development, but what we have working through this  
16 project, we have revealed that cultural arts is  
17 very important and it's not getting enough light.  
18 Just one funding from the Rockefeller Foundation  
19 is not enough to really capture what's going on in  
20 central Brooklyn. I mean, we're talking about  
21 Bed-Stuy here, most of--a lot of the artists out  
22 of Brooklyn are from Bed-Stuy, Clinton Hill,  
23 sorry, not Cypress Hills, Crown Heights. And the  
24 fact that there's not enough galleries, there  
25 isn't a arts district, Bed-Stuy Restoration pretty

2 much is the only place most artists have to show  
3 their work in Bed-Stuy, there's something wrong  
4 with that.

5 And I love Bed-Stuy Restoration,  
6 work with them a lot, but I feel like there needs  
7 to be more. There's a lot of abandoned buildings  
8 in Bed-Stuy, there's a lot of developers  
9 capitalizing off the gentrification that's trying  
10 to happen in Bed-Stuy, but what we need to do is  
11 figure out ways to fund the organizations and art  
12 initiatives coming out of Bed-Stuy that can really  
13 help galvanize the different artists and the  
14 different types of artists that's in Bed-Stuy or  
15 central Brooklyn.

16 So I come to you, not so much with  
17 the issues, but some of the solutions that I've  
18 seen and would like to just put it on the table,  
19 and anyone in the room outside of the Council that  
20 have ideas or would like to collaborate, by all  
21 means, reach out to me. One is a cultural arts  
22 district, I would love to see that. Whoever can  
23 make that happen, great. I come to you as an  
24 advocate for the people, that's it. I'm not a  
25 organization, I would love to see it happen, I

1 will be willing to work with anyone to make that  
2 happen, but I would love to see that.

3  
4 The other thing is make use of  
5 these abandoned buildings. What was it, No Empty  
6 Space? Amazing, amazing concept, I would love to  
7 see that in Brooklyn more often, more in Bed-Stuy,  
8 not just in Dumbo, Bed-Stuy got a lot of things  
9 going on as well.

10 Artist housing. There was an  
11 attempt to have an artist housing in Crown Heights  
12 a couple years ago, 770 St. Mark's. Well that  
13 landlord was exposed to be a slumlord and was  
14 written up in the top ten of New York slumlords.  
15 I lived in that building, it was a wreck. He used  
16 the artists just to fit his agenda.

17 Anyways, moving forward, galleries,  
18 we have rush arts, that's cool. You know, we have  
19 House of Art, that's cool, but it's not enough.

20 The other thing is, I'm really to  
21 open to collaboration, not just me, I actually  
22 represent a plethora of different activists in  
23 Bed-Stuy and they asked me to come here, outside  
24 of just Pratt Center and outside of Carol extended  
25 an invitation, I mentioned it, and they were like

1 you have to represent what's going on in Bed-Stuy  
2 and we need help.

3 So the other thing is identifying  
4 the cultural leaders in our community, empowering  
5 them with resources and decision-making power of  
6 what's going on in our community. The Brooklyn  
7 Nets is about to come to Brooklyn, so there's  
8 going to be a lot of economic changes in Brooklyn.  
9 But to have a economic change in Brooklyn without  
10 a cultural change, you're basically going to build  
11 a plastic metropolis. No life, no energy, no  
12 spirit.

13 Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you  
15 very much. And some would say bad basketball,  
16 but--

17 [Laughter]

18 RASU JILANI: Worse than the  
19 Knicks?

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Much worse  
21 than the Knicks. So I want to say thank you to  
22 all of you. And, you know, and I know what we're  
23 talking about is very, very serious and important.  
24 And a lot of you know that before I was elected, I  
25

2 worked for a large nonprofit and came to a lot of  
3 hearings like this, in fact, the nonprofit that I  
4 worked for came before the hearing that I now  
5 chair, and I sat in those chairs. And I just was  
6 thinking this is, you know, sometimes you wait  
7 three hours to testify and you think, you know,  
8 are there enough Council Members there, does it  
9 matter, you know, did I waste my time, you know,  
10 by being here today. And I just want to say that  
11 it's important, it really is.

12 It matters to me, I know it matters  
13 to Chairwoman Reyna and if you didn't come, right,  
14 sort of silence speaks very loudly sometimes,  
15 right? And the vacuum that you create when you  
16 don't come and testify and we don't see, you know,  
17 it's important and I just want to say that because  
18 I know, and particularly for, you know, small  
19 business owners to devote 3 1/2 hours, 4 hours,  
20 you know, and a lot of small organizations where  
21 the executive director is the artistic director,  
22 right, is the business manager, right, is the  
23 ticket seller, is everything. And so you have  
24 given a lot of time here today and I want to thank  
25 you.

2 And I also want to thank the  
3 organizers, the sort of the steering committee of  
4 the NOCD, if you will. You did a very good job of  
5 turning out the base and the constituencies,  
6 right, and I noticed that and I appreciate that.  
7 And it speaks to the seriousness of your  
8 commitment, but also your abilities, and that's  
9 really important too.

10 So I just wanted to thank  
11 everybody. As someone who now is a Council  
12 Member, but who will forever really be a community  
13 organizer who worked for a nonprofit before I got  
14 elected and who sat on those seats many, many,  
15 many times, trust me, in very long hearings. And,  
16 you know, I just want to say thank you because  
17 there were certainly times when I sat on those  
18 seats and wondered, you know, why aren't there  
19 more Council Members up there and, you know, are  
20 we wasting our time. And you're not, it matters,  
21 it's important, and I thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you for  
23 those words, my co-chair. It's always such a  
24 pleasure to have a hearing where Jimmy Van Bramer  
25 is present because there's such a personal aspect

2 to this and he lightens the room with his personal  
3 stories, and I know that it was a therapy session  
4 considering you mentioned the ex.

5 But I want to, in all seriousness,  
6 just thank the NOCD community. Those of you who  
7 are members, those of you who indirectly are  
8 members because whether you like it or not or  
9 recognize it or not, you really are--you're being  
10 considered in this movement and I respected  
11 enormously.

12 I've never sat on the Cultural  
13 Affairs Committee, my passion comes from just  
14 knowing that when my community appears on Coming  
15 to America and it's featured as being a Queens  
16 community, as opposed to Brooklyn, on the block  
17 that my parents first immigrated from the  
18 Dominican Republic on, it goes to show you how you  
19 have to set the record straight. And it makes a  
20 big difference to understand that personal  
21 attachment to community and how culture and arts  
22 and small business are all one and the same  
23 because one without the other cannot exist. And I  
24 have a community that can attest to that, having  
25 risen from the ashes from the seventies, through

2 the eighties, and here into the 21st century.

3 And I want to thank each and every  
4 one of you for having participated and continue  
5 your good work, and we look forward to achieving  
6 what is a host of recommendations that are perhaps  
7 some low hanging fruit, others higher than what we  
8 can perhaps achieve in this term, but I know my  
9 great co-chair will continue this traction and I  
10 am committed 100% to the aspect of what we have  
11 embarked in. Thank you so much.

12 [Pause]

13 [Applause]

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: This hearing is  
15 adjourned, thank you very much.

16 [Gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature *Tammy Wittman*

Date June 10, 2012