

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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January 19, 2012
Start: 1:20 p.m.
Recess: 3:33 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E:
DIANA REYNA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Council Member Mathieu Eugene
Council Member Margaret S. Chin
Council Member Peter A. Koo

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

Elizabeth De Leon
Deputy Commissioner
Department of Small Business Services

Andrea Buteau
Executive Director of Commercial Revitalization
Small Business Services

Joshua Interma
Vice President
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Dr. Cary Goodman
Executive Director
161st Business Improvement District

William Wilkins
Director of Industrial Development
Local Development Corporation of East New York

Simone Price
Executive Director
Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District

Ricardi Calixte
Director of Neighborhood Economic Development
Queens Economic Development Corporation

Angelina Ramirez
Executive Director
Washington Heights Business Improvement District

Daniel Murphy
Executive Director
Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District

Laurel Brown
Executive Director
Jamaica Center Business Improvement District

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[gavel, background noise]

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Good afternoon, and happy new year to those of you who I have not seen since the new year began. I just wanted to welcome everyone. My name is Diana Reyna. And I'm proud to represent my personal district, the 34th, which includes Williamsburg, Bushwick and Ridgewood, Queens; as well as serving the Chair of this Small Business Committee that oversees and advocates for over 215,000 small businesses across the five boroughs. I want to welcome my colleagues in government, starting with my colleague here in the Small Business Committee, Council Member Eugene. And we will joined by others as the hearing moves along. Elizabeth De Leon, Deputy Commissioner of Neighborhood Development at the Department of Small Business Services, has joined us; as well as Andrea Buteau--thank god I got that right [laughter]--Director of Avenue NYC at the Department of Small Business Services; Barry Dinnerstein [phonetic] from the Department of City Planning; as well as representative from EDC, another local economic development and community revitalization

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2 organizations. I'd like to thank Reggie, Reginald
3 Thomas, who has been instrumental in making sure
4 that we had good cooperation from the
5 Administration in convening this hearing. We
6 convene the Small Business Committee today to
7 explore ways to strengthen New York City's retail
8 corridors. We will be reviewing three programs
9 administered by the Department of Small Business
10 Services. The first one is Avenue NYC, a capacity
11 building program for nonprofit, economic
12 development organizations. The number two, the
13 second program, the Neighborhood Retail Leasing
14 Program, a pilot program that provides specific
15 neighborhoods with targeted technical assistance.
16 And the third, the neighborhood leadership
17 program, a five month, part time leadership
18 training program for individuals working at BIDs,
19 or Business Improvement Districts, or other
20 nonprofit organizations that serve commercial
21 districts in New York City. I'm happy to say that
22 my staff was on the phone with a participant small
23 business owner who could not come today and is
24 busy completing their - - leadership training and
25 was very committed not to skip class. So clearly

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2 there is a real sense of pride in the
3 participation of this program. As many of you
4 know, small businesses are the backbone of New
5 York City's economy and account for almost two-
6 thirds of the City's private sector jobs. The
7 small business sector employs over 1.5 million
8 people. Of the approximately 215,000 small
9 businesses in New York City, nearly 90 percent
10 have 20 or fewer employees. And over 60 percent
11 have five or fewer employees. The importance of
12 the small business sector to New York City's
13 economy and job market cannot be overstated. New
14 York City is a city of neighborhoods, these
15 neighborhoods allow millions of New Yorkers, as
16 well as tourists, to come together and create
17 successful and viable communities. The City's
18 commercial and retail corridors, the main streets
19 where residents shop for goods and services and
20 where small business owners can prosper are at the
21 heart of these diverse neighborhoods and
22 communities. Clean and safe and attractive
23 commercial districts are the foundation of any
24 healthy community. Throughout the five boroughs,
25 nonprofit economic development organizations or

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2 BIDs, as well as merchants association and local
3 development corporations, play an important role
4 in helping local commercial districts become
5 vibrant places to live, work and do business. And
6 the City has in place a suit of programs designed
7 to support these community organizations. That is
8 why it is important for the Committee to, of Small
9 Business, to examine Avenue NYC, the neighborhood
10 retail leasing program, and the neighborhood
11 leadership program. All three of these programs
12 go toward helping the City's commercial districts
13 realize their full potential. At this time, I
14 would like to invite the Department of Small
15 Business Services to deliver their statement. And
16 we have also been joined by Council Member Peter
17 Koo from Queens. Thank you. As we're joined by
18 the agency, I just want to thank my, our Counsel
19 to this Committee, Matthew Hickey, our Policy
20 Analyst, Faith Corbett, and our Finance Analyst
21 Ralph Hernandez, for all of their time and effort
22 into preparing for this hearing. As well as my
23 staff, I am sorry, I always take 'em for granted
24 here. Peter, Peter Patier [phonetic] from my
25 office, thank you. [pause] You may begin

1
2 whenever you're ready. [cell phone ring, pause]
3 Press the button behind. A little above.

4 ELIZABETH DE LEON: Hello? Okay.
5 So, good afternoon, Chairwoman Reyna and Members
6 of the Committee on Small Business. I am
7 Elizabeth De Leon, Deputy Commissioner at the
8 Department of Small Business Services. I'm joined
9 by the Executive Director for Commercial
10 Revitalization, Andrea Buteau, along with the
11 Program Manager, Xavier Stewart, and other
12 colleagues, from SBS, as well as representatives
13 from the Economic Development Corporation and the
14 Department of City Planning who are here to help
15 any questions you may have. In the 2010 Avenue
16 NYC Annual Report, Mayor Bloomberg wrote that "Our
17 City's retail corridors provide jobs for New
18 Yorkers, opportunities for entrepreneurs, and
19 goods and services for our millions of residents
20 and visitors. They are critically important to
21 our economy and quality of life. Today I will
22 discuss three programs at SBS designed to
23 strengthen New York City's retail corridors:
24 Avenue NYC, Neighborhood Retail Leasing and
25 Neighborhood Leadership. These programs are

1
2 unique in that they rely on local and on the
3 ground efforts to empower communities. They are
4 bottom up solutions to revitalizing commercial
5 corridors according to unique local needs. We are
6 fortunate to have the Council's partnership in
7 these efforts and look forward to working with the
8 Council and this Committee, in particular, to
9 promote and expand our impact along retail
10 corridors in 2012. Avenue NYC. The Department of
11 Small business Services has supported the creation
12 and growth of not-for-profit economic development
13 organizations since the 1970s, when the City began
14 to prioritize commercial revitalization as one
15 mechanism to stabilize dangerous and blighted
16 neighborhoods. Today, New York is a very
17 different place. But the empowerment of local
18 organizations to conduct commercial revitalization
19 is equally crucial. The Avenue NYC program funds
20 commercial revitalization initiatives by community
21 based, not-for-profit organizations in
22 neighborhood retail districts through the City's
23 five boroughs. And also offers an array of
24 capacity building services designed to enhance the
25 abilities of participating organizations to

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2 execute impactful programs. Avenue NYC is funded
3 entirely through community development block grant
4 allocations provided by the United States
5 Department of Housing and Urban development.
6 Projects are targeted towards commercial
7 corridors, that serve neighborhoods federally
8 designated as low to moderate income and are
9 subject to federal guidelines for disbursements of
10 the CDBG funding. Avenue NYC stipulates that
11 applicants must be not-for-profit economic
12 development organizations operating in any of the
13 five boroughs in New York City. Incorporated as a
14 not-for-profit in New York State, and compliant
15 with both State and federal filing requirements,
16 proposed projects must operate within defined
17 geographic boundaries, target commercial corridors
18 as a whole, without providing individual
19 businesses as a whole--without providing
20 individual business assistance and consider the
21 needs to small and medium sized businesses
22 operating in the geographic areas. Organizations
23 must target areas that are designated by the HUD
24 to be low or moderate income neighborhoods, or
25 where at least 51 percent of the residents in the

1
2 census tracks included in the commercial area are
3 persons living in households with incomes below 80
4 percent of the median household income. In Fiscal
5 Year 2012, SBS received proposals from 72
6 organizations to fund 131 projects, totaling over
7 \$4.6 million. We rely on a rigorous and
8 competitive application process that takes three
9 criteria into account: existing organizational
10 capacity, strength of project proposal and
11 viability of the proposed budget. For those
12 organizations that received funding in previous
13 years, a performance rating from those years is
14 also assigned and considered. This year, SBS
15 awarded \$1.7 million in grants to fund 72 projects
16 by 48 local not-for-profit economic development
17 organizations, throughout the five boroughs
18 citywide. Projects were awarded in the following
19 categories: business attraction, façade
20 improvement management, merchant organizing,
21 micro-grants, multi-neighborhood initiatives,
22 place making and website development. For your
23 review, attached please find the complete list of
24 funded projects and organizations as well as a
25 breakdown of the projects by borough and project

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2 category. These are projects that make a
3 difference. Last year, for example, the Women's
4 Housing and Economic Development Corporation on
5 Southern Boulevard in The Bronx, received two
6 grants for \$50,000 and \$25,000 in business
7 attraction and merchant organizing. WHEDco.
8 [phonetic] attracted four new businesses, updated
9 the commercial space and vacant lot inventory,
10 mapped the retail trade area and completed a
11 retail trade analysis. WHEDco recruited 18 new
12 merchants, held multiple merchant meetings and
13 sales events, and carried out a district needs
14 survey. Southern Boulevard is undergoing a
15 visible transformation, thanks in no small part to
16 the work of WHEDco. Reductions in government
17 spending have required agencies to cut back on
18 various programs, and Avenue NYC is no exception.
19 Next year we expect to receive a ten percent
20 reduction in federal CDBG funding for the program,
21 SBS will likely address this in one of two ways:
22 by reducing the number of projects funded or by
23 reducing the average grant size. It will require
24 us to make difficult choices while making a
25 stronger commitment to work even closer with

1 participating organizations in order to do more
2 with less. We appreciate the Council's efforts to
3 help us maintain the quantity and quality of
4 commercial revitalization projects in low and
5 moderate income areas. The neighborhood retail
6 leasing program. In 2011, SBS launched two new
7 pilot programs to increase the impact of community
8 based, not-for-profit organizations on commercial
9 revitalization initiatives: Neighborhood Retail
10 Leasing and Neighborhood Leadership. Neighborhood
11 Retail Leasing provides a targeted approach to a
12 common problem. While Neighborhood economic
13 development leaders may be experts about the needs
14 of their communities, they may not have the
15 distinct set of technical skills necessary to
16 identify and recruit businesses to fill the
17 commercial vacancies. Retail leasing is a two
18 part training and assistance program designed to
19 give neighborhood leaders the skillset necessary
20 to cultivate a retail mix that meets the unique
21 needs to the communities they serve. First, SBS
22 offers a series of training workshops and sessions
23 open to the City's network of business improvement
24 districts and local development corporations focus
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2 specifically on retail leasing strategies. In
3 Fiscal Year 2011, 19 Avenue NYC funded community
4 organizations participated in a two session retail
5 leasing workshop series with panels on the basics
6 of retail attraction and site selection, in how to
7 identify the right retailers for your community.

8 And 40 organizations participated in a panel
9 discussion on strategies for ongoing retail
10 attraction and keeping vacancies down. Each
11 organization also received a tailored retail
12 market analysis of its district. In addition to
13 providing technical information with local
14 examples, SBS also convened a retail leasing panel
15 to showcase best practices from across the region
16 with representatives from Philadelphia, Center
17 City District, and the new Rochelle BID.

18 Responses to the sessions have been strongly
19 positive. Retail leasing also provides a small
20 number of organizations in high need communities
21 with in-depth, one-on-one technical assistance.

22 In the 2011 pilot program, SBS worked with the
23 JGSC group to offer targeted technical assistance
24 to help identify a range of retailers that can be
25 supported by local markets in four communities:

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2 Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bradhurst Harlem, Long Island
3 City and Southern Boulevard in The Bronx. The
4 participating organizations--Bedford-Stuyvesant
5 Gateway Business Improvement District, Harlem
6 Congregations for Community Improvement, Long
7 Island City Business Development Corporation, and
8 the Women's Housing and Economic Development
9 Corporation--received in-depth market and
10 demographic analysis, a district wide retail
11 leasing plan, district marketing materials, and a
12 set of pre-qualified prospects to begin their
13 marketing outreach. For your review, I brought
14 several samples of marketing materials from the
15 pilot sites. The program has already shown some
16 promising signs. In Long Island City, where
17 leasing efforts targeted restaurants and fitness
18 facilities, the BID helped facilitate the
19 attraction of a Planet Fitness gym, a Dunkin'
20 Donuts, an Asian barbecue restaurant, and a
21 Checkers Hamburger restaurant. In Bedford-
22 Stuyvesant the BID actively pursued new healthy
23 dining options, resulting in a Fulton Street lease
24 signing of Island Salad, an expansion of the
25 Harlem based small business. The Harlem

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2 Congregations for Community Improvement
3 successfully attracted a hardware store, and a
4 minority owned daycare center, In the South
5 Bronx, commercial vacancies on Southern Boulevard
6 have decreased from 24 percent to 16 percent, as
7 twelve new businesses in the desired retail
8 categories entered leases during the program. SBS
9 is currently reviewing candidates for target
10 assistance this year. Neighborhood Leadership.
11 In 2011, SBS launched the Neighborhood Leadership
12 Program in partnership with the Coro New York
13 Leadership Center and the Association for a Better
14 New York? Neighborhood Leadership is a five month
15 free training program that provides 20 leaders
16 from community based economic development not-for-
17 profits across the five boroughs with development
18 and leadership and commercial revitalization
19 skills. The program incorporates leadership
20 retreat days, strategy sessions and a neighborhood
21 change project, and experienced Coro alumni
22 advisors to help participants build lasting
23 relationships with other leaders, learn and
24 practice leadership skills, expand networks to key
25 stakeholders, and learn strategies in small

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2 business fundamental networks, retail sales, and
3 improving tenant mixes and more. The pilot cohort
4 was a diverse group of 20 individuals from small
5 organizations in low and moderate income
6 neighborhoods, from all five boroughs. And the
7 reviews are in: here is Blaze Bocker [phonetic],
8 the Executive Director of the Myrtle Avenue
9 Brooklyn Partnership statement, "Neighborhood
10 Leadership was a huge benefit to my professional
11 development and has helped me both on and off the
12 job. As a Director of a small nonprofit, my busy
13 workday rarely provides me with the time to
14 reflect on my leadership skills and work habits.
15 This program provided me with a much needed
16 opportunity to pause from work in order to develop
17 my skills, assess my current challenges, and
18 develop strategies to overcome them; and to learn
19 from my peers and Coro's excellent facilitators.
20 I highly recommend the program for those working
21 in the field of neighborhood and commercial
22 revitalization. In December, SBS and Coro
23 selected a second cohort of 20 from 34
24 applications. It is another exceptionally strong
25 and talented class, with diverse representation

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2 from all five boroughs. The program begins at the
3 end of January and is generously supported by
4 Speaker Christine Quinn. We're currently
5 finalizing plans for an opening ceremony, for the
6 first week in February with Speaker Quinn and
7 Deputy Mayor Steel. We would also like to extend
8 an invitation to Council Members from Districts
9 with Neighborhood Leadership participants. For a
10 full list of the participants and additional
11 information on the program, please see the
12 attached documents. Avenue NYC, Neighborhood
13 Retail Leasing and Neighborhood Leadership are
14 three ways this Administration and this agency are
15 prioritizing the vitality of the City's retail
16 corridors. These programs do not seek to impose a
17 top-down, one size fits all approach to commercial
18 revitalization; rather, they're about empowering
19 local leaders and individual communities to help
20 create change in their own neighborhoods. I would
21 be remiss not to thank the Council for all of your
22 help in supporting these three programs
23 specifically, and in putting the focus on the
24 City's retail corridors more generally. We have
25 come a long way in ten years, but I know we can do

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2 more to spread the word and work with community
3 partners to support small businesses and
4 neighborhoods across the five boroughs. I would
5 be happy to answer any questions you may have.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I just want to
8 take this time to thank the leadership of the
9 Department of Small Business Services for an
10 excellent statement as to the, some of the results
11 of the three programs. I wanted to just start off
12 questions regarding more specific issues, in--how
13 many economic development organizations have
14 received capacity building services overall? Do
15 we have a secure number?

16 ELIZABETH DE LEON: So, I'll defer
17 that question to Andrea to answer.

18 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. How do I tell
19 this [crosstalk] Oh, okay. Hello, everyone, I'm
20 Andrea Buteau, I'm the Executive Director of
21 Commercial Revitalization for Small Business
22 Services. Generally, we work with about 100
23 different neighborhood organizations each year,
24 either through our Avenue NYC program or
25 organizations that attend our workshops and

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roundtables each year.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And do you believe that the Avenue NYC grants have received more or less interest in, through the application process? So not just word of mouth interest, but actual physical applications where the increase or the decrease allows you to understand where your priorities are going to be as far as fiscal prudence is concerned, where you have to make tough decisions that you don't decrease the level of grants in this particular program versus another.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. So, in 2012, we did receive an increase in applications by 4.3 percent. And our allocations reflect the requests. So, for instance, if we receive the most applications for a certain project area, for instance business attraction, we generally grant the most money in projects in that category, as well.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: So there's a lot of common sense behind it. [laughter]

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Happy to here.

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And what is the breakdown by borough now?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure. Well, the breakdown by borough of applications, it's a little bit larger than the actual allocation, but in 2012, we received 14 applications from The Bronx, 21 applications from Brooklyn, three applications from citywide organizations that serve communities across the--

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay, repeat the number, I'm sorry, 14 from The Bronx, how many from Brooklyn?

ANDREA BUTEAU: We received 21 applications from Brooklyn.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Three applications from organizations that serve the entire city, 14 applications from organizations in Manhattan, 16 from organizations in Queens, and four from organizations in Staten Island, for a total of 72 organizations that applied for the program.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm. And has DSBS made an assessment as to where the greatest need is, separate and aside from the actual interest through an application?

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2 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. So we just
3 finished an assessment survey on January 9th, and
4 we had a majority of our Avenue NYC grantees
5 responding. Their largest need generally tends to
6 be around fundraising and fund development.
7 However, they also expressed a lot of interest in
8 developing their marketing skills for their
9 community, and particularly through social
10 networking. So, our agency is looking at
11 developing a training workshop to take place in
12 the coming months around marketing and special,
13 social networking.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay. And
15 Avenue NYC provides funding for specific
16 commercial revitalization projects. How many of
17 these projects, project areas, how many project
18 areas are there? So, if you could just give me
19 the criteria--I guess, do you break your
20 application interest into certain categories that
21 allows you to then have them be user friendly, so
22 that the applicant isn't having to create or
23 recreate the wheel of what it is they're applying
24 for?

25 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. So this year

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2 in 2012, we are funding six project categories.
3 Those categories are Business Attraction, in which
4 we help organizations fill vacancies and attract
5 the businesses that they need in their community;
6 we also are funding a façade improvement
7 management program, that provides organizations
8 with resources to help manage façade improvement
9 programs; merchant organizing; a multi-
10 neighborhood initiative project, for those that
11 are serving more than one commercial corridor; a
12 category we call "place making," which is helping
13 organizations market their community and bring the
14 shoppers that they would like into their community
15 to drive sales, and also a website development
16 program as for creating websites for communities.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And these have
18 been consistent areas, right, throughout the
19 process of the marketing of this program.

20 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, there's been
21 some evolution in recent years to meet some
22 changing needs of the communities, but generally
23 they've stayed consistent.

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And the
25 applicant does not necessarily have to do all--

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ANDREA BUTEAU: No.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --one, two, three, four, five, six categories, but they can choose one or all packaged to their needs.

ANDREA BUTEAU: That's right. So, an organization applies for one or all of the categories, and receives grants for one of those project categories, or two or three.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And have--have you seen a significant difference in the retail--so, does, is there an expectation that whoever applies would have to work within a bound--a set boundary according to what their nonprofit is designed by geographically? Or can they, can the applicant just focus on what would be a specific stretch of blocks? Not necessarily the whole geographic area.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah. Yeah, that's a good question. As part of our guidelines, we ask groups to designated a commercial corridor or certain number of blocks as a target area. And that can be of their, of their preference.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And do you feel that organizations are meeting those goals? Or

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2 you know, if they say they're going to achieve
3 three business attractions, that they're, the
4 actual, the projected is becoming an actual.

5 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah. That's, it
6 is true, yes, we, we have seen, last year our
7 results were, they exceeded our goals, and groups
8 are meeting, meeting their expected outcomes.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Andrea, as far
10 as the Avenue NYC is concerned, are the same
11 groups applying, or do you see a different
12 spectrum of, as word gets out, as people start
13 seeing the fruits of their labor, that the
14 application cycle changes amongst organizations,
15 that it's not, you know, a continuous expectation
16 of the same groups being funded.

17 ANDREA BUTEAU: That's all a really
18 great question. We do see a lot of repeat
19 applicants and each year we do get a few new
20 groups. And we're very, we're thrilled about
21 that. We make a, an effort to try to outreach to
22 new groups, and encourage all the Council Members
23 and community boards and whoever we can to
24 nominate or help their groups that are new groups
25 applying. We're also looking at ways to help

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foster new and emerging organizations, as well.
We're doing things like creating guides on how to
form a merchants association and continuously
trying to help new groups get up and running.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: What are some
of the key determining factors for eligibility?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. So, the, the
main factor is that they're working, that
organizations are working in low to--the low to
moderate income communities. If they meet the
basic guidelines, meaning working in low income
communities, and also--

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And just stop
right there, if you could just--

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --clarify for
me further--

ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --is that 2000
census or 2010 census?

ANDREA BUTEAU: We're still using
the 2000 data.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Organizations then

1
2 submit applications and the applications are
3 reviewed by committees of three individuals, and
4 are rated on a 100 point scale. We rate
5 organizations on their capacity, organizational
6 capacity, which we have a detailed criteria for.
7 We rate organizations also on their, the strength
8 of their proposal, and we rate them on their
9 strength of their proposed budget. And we have
10 detailed criteria for those if you'd like more
11 information.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay. Peter,
13 do you have any questions? Yeah? I'm just going
14 to take a break and--

15 ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --allow for--

17 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --Council
19 Member Koo from Queens to ask a few questions, as
20 well. Thank you.

21 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you,
23 Chair Diana, and thank you Commissioners and
24 Director from the SBS for coming here. My
25 question is, I notice that you have mentioned

1
2 three different important programs, Avenue NYC,
3 and Neighborhood Leadership, Neighborhood Retail
4 Leasing. And how do you let the community know
5 about this? I mean, how do they know, SBS has
6 those programs, so that the next time they can
7 apply and they can participate?

8 ANDREA BUTEAU: That's also a
9 really great question.

10 ELIZABETH DE LEON: [off mic] In
11 several ways.

12 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, there's a
13 number of ways that we do that. The first, for
14 our Avenue NYC program, we have a mailing list of
15 over 300 organizations that we maintain and update
16 each year. We email everybody, letting them know
17 that the application process is open. We send
18 letters to all the Council Members' offices and
19 the community boards. We hold information
20 sessions and encourage attendance. And we do
21 everything we can to try to get the word out, we
22 really want to drive applications to that program.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, so you
24 have notified all the Council Members in the
25 district, in different districts?

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ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: When you have the opportunity's come up?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. Yes, - -

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: And among all the applicants, are there anyone from the Asian American organizations?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Can you name a few, or--?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure. For our 2012 Avenue NYC program, we're working AFFI [phonetic] to help organize the business owners on Union Street in Flushing. We're also helping them build a website for that commercial district, as well. Who else do we have? We, for Neighborhood Leadership, for our next year's cohort, we have Wellington Chen from the Chinatown Partnership, going to be participating in that, we well. Is there anybody else in our Avenue NYC?

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Who's--as far as I remember, I don't recall any Asian American organizations, especially in Queens, participating in any of these projects. You had mentioned AFFI

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on Union Street. I never heard anything about that. When did they start that?

ANDREA BUTEAU: They were awarded in July of 2011, and they're going to be building the website in the next six months. And have been organizing the business owners along Union Street, the Union Street Business Association, I believe the name is.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Maybe I know I have applied \$400,000 grant for them to do beautification.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Oh--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: On Union Street. But there's not, this is not related to your projects, though.

ANDREA BUTEAU: No. No, so we're focusing on the merchant organization aspect. So they're trying to create a vision for that, for that street, help the business owners get their voices heard, and then create a resource via the website, to help the community members, the business owners, and also to drive traffic and shopping to that district. I know that they're struggling right now. So that's the goal of that

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program.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Well, as most of you know, Asian American population is growing every year in New York City. In Chinatown, in AF - - and in Queens especially around Flushing area. So, even though the myth is Asian Americans are, "Oh, they're good businesspeople," they don't need help, but they're, it's only a myth. A lot of Asian Americans, they are just like any other immigrants, they need help from SBS to provide credit, to give them training. So, my, my point is I want to stress is, in the future, when you have any opportunities come up, application wise or whatever, please notify all these respective organizations in the different areas.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: They're just like any other immigrant groups, they have some smart people, some not so smart people, some educated some not educated. So, they do need help. And then we, so it's only among the immigrants, because of the language and cultural barriers, they have a hard time to succeed in business now, during this economic crisis we have.

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ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: All right?

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Thank you.

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ANDREA BUTEAU: Very duly noted,

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thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you very

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much, Council Member Koo. I do want to just stay

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on the line of questioning regarding the language,

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and the difficulty or language access to

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understanding and applying for these grants. And

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so similar to what Council Member Koo is

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mentioning, what is the capacity of DSBS's

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translation services? Are you working with your

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sister agency, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, to

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be able to provide the information one step

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further, beyond what is obvious as far as LDCs are

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concerned, Local Development Corporations, or your

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BIDs, or your commercial corridors that are more

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organized and have no language barrier versus

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those that do?

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ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, that's also,

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that's a really great question. We recognize the

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challenge that our, that the immigrant communities

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face when doing things like contracting and

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2 accessing resources. So, we're making efforts now
3 to make sure that all of our materials are in
4 multiple languages. For instance, we have a
5 website development program through Avenue NYC,
6 and those websites are going to be available in
7 multiple languages. We also are, like I
8 mentioned, are creating a merchant organizing
9 guide that will be available in multiple
10 languages, as well, and we're continuing to make
11 those improvements.

12 ELIZABETH DE LEON: But in addition
13 to that. I just wanted to add, for the small
14 businesses, because SBS also deals with the
15 business solution centers, that's another avenue.
16 So, you know, it's, we're all working together.
17 If we are not able to help them, to help a
18 business or a community with the grants, we're
19 able to make sure that, you know, other services
20 that are available through the agency, they have
21 access to.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: So, I wanted to
23 just--did you have another question, Council
24 Member Koo, are you--Okay. As we move along,
25 certainly stop me. We've been joined by Council

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2 Member Margaret Chin, from Manhattan, and I want
3 to just give her an opportunity--are you ready to
4 ask questions? Good--to ask questions, as well.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

6 Commissioner and, see you again. Okay. In, I
7 wanted to focus on like in, in my district, just
8 to give you an example, the retail businesses,
9 especially the jewelry business, recently there've
10 been a couple case of robbery, which is getting
11 more and more. And the jewelry business in
12 Chinatown is, is very large, I mean it it's on
13 Cana Street, it is on Bowery, it's pretty well
14 known, famous, I mean, Diamond District down here,
15 I mean, it's like pretty well known. And so I was
16 wondering like for these businesses, how do
17 Department of Small Business, like how can you
18 help them, sort of like work on providing better
19 security, and there are some program that can
20 assist 'em? 'Cause I know that the Police
21 Department, the local precinct have been doing
22 some workshops and giving them information. But
23 sort of like getting people to really do
24 something. Like for example, there were some
25 suggestions about putting security cameras along

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2 the street and also helping the business owner to
3 utilize whatever security system that they have.
4 I mean once case where there was a robbery, and
5 tape wasn't rolling, so the police could not get
6 the evidence. I mean, on one hand we have to
7 educate the business owner how to kind of help
8 themselves, but is there a program that can really
9 help beef up the security. I mean, so security
10 camera along the street. And the other thing is
11 that in order to attract more businesses and
12 customer, I mean the streets needs to be well lit,
13 so are there programs also working with the small
14 business, and Con Ed, that Department of Small
15 Business Services can facilitate that people can
16 leave, you know, some light on outside their
17 business so that at least the street could be
18 welcoming and safe and well lit.

19 ANDREA BUTEAU: That's also a
20 really good question. In many communities, the
21 best way to address the security issue is through
22 our Business Improvement Districts. And I know
23 that we have the Chinatown BID coming online very
24 shortly. And we would encourage all the business
25 owners to work with the Chinatown BID through the

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2 security program. I would also say that for the
3 lighting question, there is a Lower Manhattan
4 incentives program that provides incentives for
5 businesses that do upgrades to their stores, in
6 order to provide more energy efficient lighting
7 and those types of things, and we'd be happy to
8 put business owners in contact with our friends at
9 Con Ed, as well, to talk about ways that they can
10 help upgrade their stores and improve the lighting
11 along the streets.

12 ELIZABETH DE LEON: So one of, in
13 addition to that, there are a couple of things
14 that SBS does. We have liaisons that sit at all
15 the BIDs, where we also have communication with
16 all the other not-for-profit organizations, all
17 the other City agencies that work within the
18 certain communities. Many times we are, if we're
19 not leading we're spearheading or we're trying to
20 bring people together, in order to figure out what
21 to do to address the issues such as security. If
22 there's a BID, especially because we sit--as you
23 all know, we sit on the BID, and so does the
24 Comptroller's Office, and two other City agencies,
25 and the Council Members also--it's easier. But

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2 that doesn't mean that because we sit there we
3 don't know what's outside of the BIDs and what's
4 going on, that's also affecting the outside areas.
5 It's, so, it's, you know, we're very active in
6 those discussions. Many times, like I said, we
7 actually meet with DOT and other agencies to
8 figure out what ways, what we could do, to bring
9 the information to the agencies that address the
10 issues of the community. But it's something that
11 we do on a daily basis.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I know
13 that in many of the area, there are Business
14 Improvement District, and the one in Chinatown is,
15 is coming on board, I mean, they just got the
16 interim board, but I just want to make sure that I
17 know there's some representative out here who are
18 from Business Improvement District, that they do
19 get the resource. Because, you know, security
20 programs, they're not cheap. So, it's sort of
21 like, how to help them find the resources to help
22 these small businesses. So I think that's one
23 thing that I would really look towards your agency
24 to kind of take the lead on that, so that
25 information and support gets out there, so that

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2 they don't get discouraged. I mean, like, the
3 businesses themselves, they don't organize until
4 something hit 'em. So, now I mean, they're, they
5 have to get together and I don't want 'em to just
6 look at us as, "Okay, what are City Council
7 Members going to do?" but we need to all work
8 together. And if there are some solution, how can
9 we kind of bring the resources to make it happen.
10 And then publicize it so people in the community
11 know that, "Hey, City government is working with
12 you to solve this problem, it's not that we're,
13 we're not paying attention.

14 ELIZABETH DE LEON: Right, and we
15 do have teams within SBS. So for example there is
16 a team that Andrea just discussed that talks about
17 the initiatives with Con Edison and other, you
18 know, partnerships that we have. But also we have
19 an emergency team, so for example Washington
20 Heights is a perfect example. There was a fire,
21 there was an issue of security, there was an issue
22 of property, and we had an emergency team that's
23 headed by Bernadette Nation, that literally was on
24 the ground, you know, at a moment's notice, that
25 dealt with all those issues. But also coordinated

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all the agencies that were involved. So, there are other teams on board.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I think that I know about the emergency and Bernadette Nation, we worked with her when there was fire in the SoHo area and in Chinatown. But I think that if, if somehow we can get, so at the police department and the, the Department of Small Business Services, 'cause when that happened, when a robbery happened or it happened a couple of times, we just wanted people to think of you guys first.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Of us, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: You know, like, okay, just, not just the police but how do the police will know to bring you in--

ANDREA BUTEAU: Right, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And say, "Well, how can we help them solve this security issue?"

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --so that we can prevent this crime from happening again. I mean, the police do their thing. But there are,

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2 maybe there are some ways and some resources that
3 we can let the small business people know that
4 they can access. So, I think they just go to know
5 about you guys more. You know? And I guess what
6 Council Member Koo said, you know, the language is
7 a barrier.

8 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: And so we
10 just need to make sure that we can overcome those
11 issues.

12 ANDREA BUTEAU: Every year, we do a
13 meeting with the precincts, in all the business
14 community, business organizations, and it's
15 organized by SBS. And we do one in every borough,
16 and a couple in--we do, actually do on in Lower
17 Manhattan and one Upper Manhattan. And we do
18 these meetings with all the precincts and all the
19 community organizations, and they, and the
20 business, the business community with that exact
21 purpose in mind, linking the security and
22 resources for businesses together with the
23 precincts and small business services, and we're
24 always looking at ways that we can try to do more.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, can you

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just, the last question, is like can you just let us know when you're doing that this year?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Or you already--?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah.

ANDREA BUTEAU: We'll make sure to keep--

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: That would be helpful, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I just wanted to chime in to ask, the Consumer Affairs Department has this outreach blitz with each Council Member and every year they're able to do what would be, on a quarterly basis, a new district. And has the Department of Small Business Services ever had an outreach blitz with small businesses in each Council district? So that we're able to coordinate what would be this particular example of what Council Member Chin has mentioned, where small businesses are out there, even in a BID where it's organized, the small business owner is not about sitting at a table

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2 wasting time, they have to sell their goods, and
3 taking the, convincing them to stop their
4 operations is close to not happening. And we want
5 to be able to express to small businesses that
6 there is an agency that's dedicated to their
7 needs. And it doesn't fall on deaf ears. And so,
8 is this something that, as the business
9 development department within your unit--

10 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: -can undertake
12 as perhaps, you know, a few of the--an example, a
13 perfect example, is where there's language
14 barrier.

15 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: You know, areas
17 where there is a real language barrier to be able
18 to say, "Let's come in, we'll bring in all the
19 particular arms of the different agencies to come
20 along with us, so that we're the outreach unit
21 that's going to make sure that, presents
22 themselves in saying, "We're here for you."

23 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: You know, if
25 there's a fire, this is who you call; if there's a

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2 crime that happens, this is what we're, how we can
3 help you. You know, this is business solutions,
4 this is what they do. But it just encourages a
5 way that doesn't have the business owner leave
6 their day-to-day operations to come to you, but
7 rather you come to them.

8 ANDREA BUTEAU: That's, that's a
9 great question. We've actually, we hear that all
10 the time, that it's a really, it's really
11 challenging of business owners to leave to go to
12 one of our centers. So, what we, we do a type of
13 outreach in two ways. This year, we're happy to
14 announce that we have launched a partnership with
15 the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, which we call
16 our Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Project, in
17 which account managers at the solution center have
18 been assigned to communities across the entire
19 borough and are going out in the corridor to have,
20 to literally walk the districts, to walk into the
21 business owners, to the stores, explaining some of
22 our services, but also having workshops in the
23 communities, having opportunities for what we call
24 "office hours," for business owners to come in to
25 a location in the community to get services. And

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2 for, been ramping that up this year in Brooklyn.
3 And the other way that we do that is through all
4 of our attendance at merchant meetings, our BID
5 meetings and community board meetings, as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right, and,
7 Andrea, I appreciate that piece, the problem is
8 that it gets locked into a dialogue within four
9 walls, as opposed to walking the business-to-
10 business--

11 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --customer
13 face-to-face time, that each business is in need
14 of, so that the Council offices are the first line
15 of defense for a business because that's their
16 loc--their most, their closest avenue to the City.
17 And so, you know, nine times out of ten, you ask,
18 "Well, do you know that there's a Department of
19 Small Business Services?" they'll say, "No." And
20 so, you know, changing that dynamic is important
21 so that these services don't just stay locked into
22 the same groups of people, but rather where it's
23 most needed, those that don't know about you.

24 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah. That's--

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'm sorry, I

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2 just want to make sure that it--you know, and I
3 know I've walked my office, my staff in
4 particular, have walked with the Consumer Affairs
5 Department and it was very interesting, there was
6 a situation where the business owner knew
7 emphatically that they were going to give him a
8 ticket. And threw out half of his produce from
9 his refrigerator. And before they could even say,
10 "No, don't do it," it was all in the garbage,
11 because the last time they had visited, they had
12 ticketed him and they made him throw it out. And
13 it was product that his wife makes that he's
14 selling in the actual grocery store. And this
15 particular business owner just thought that as
16 soon as government officials were coming in, it
17 was to receive a summons.

18 ANDREA BUTEAU: Oh.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: It's an
20 unfortunate circumstance, but that is the story
21 out there that we have to start changing. And
22 those are the dynamics that we have to improve on.
23 And this is a man who's just trying to make hand-
24 over-fist, you know, not, barely making a profit
25 because he's trying to deal with the regulations.

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2 And you know, when, when he has an opportunity to
3 go and be creative with his business, he's not
4 allowed to because it'll cost him more money. And
5 the Department of Small Business Services could
6 clearly build his capacity to understand what he
7 needs to change and improve, and what his assets
8 are that he can continue to flourish.

9 ELIZABETH DE LEON: So, it's, when
10 we had the last hearing, we had discussed the
11 spotlights that actually the last one we did was
12 in Council Member Koo's district. So basically
13 expanding on that is your, to address the larger--

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

15 ELIZABETH DE LEON: That's a good
16 idea, okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Council Member
18 Koo had a question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay. Thank
20 you, Chair. I want to piggyback on what our Chair
21 has just said, you know. We all know small
22 businesses are the backbone of the economy, and
23 we've said that thousands of times, you know, and
24 small business pay a lot of city governments, they
25 contribute a lot to the City government's

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2 revenues. We pay tax, we pay property tax, we pay
3 income tax. And you know, on top of, we pay so
4 much things. The City doesn't provide much
5 service to the small business. No, they don't
6 pick up their garbage, and then in case of
7 robbery, I mean, sometimes they have, like Council
8 Member Chin has just, jewelry stores, they have
9 robbery cases, usually don't, the City doesn't
10 give them much help. And then, I mean, usually
11 they can solve the problem by just sending
12 additional policemen walking the beat around
13 there, at the busy hours, you know, that would
14 solve the problem. But usually they are reluctant
15 to do that. So, I want SBS to be, in addition to
16 your roles of--you just mentioned about attract
17 new business, help businesspeople apply for
18 different permits. I want you to be a strong
19 advocate for small businesspeople. I mean,
20 instead of just listening, you go do something
21 about it, after listen you take interest in the
22 problem, be an advocate. Like, if businesses have
23 a problem with Department of Health, we all know
24 restaurants are main, big part of our small
25 businesses, in any part of the town, right? But

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2 they have a lot of problem lately with Department
3 of Health getting inspections, all the time,
4 getting Cs or closing their businesses. So, I
5 want maybe SBS to create a liaison between your
6 Department and the Health Department, so when
7 restaurants have problem, they can ask you to go
8 between, you know, to help them to solve their
9 problems. Or Sanitation Department, they give
10 unnecessary tickets for their garbage. And then I
11 want you to begin a liaison between the Police
12 Department, or Consumer Affairs Department,
13 because they always go to the small business for
14 enforcement, for they--so that they can lay out
15 tickets to fine them thousands of dollars. But
16 meanwhile, we have all this illegal vendors on the
17 streets, every week they're there, I complain to
18 the police, they say, "Oh, we already ticketed
19 them." So, that's it? You just ticket 'em and
20 then you move - - they're illegal businesses,
21 they're chipping away regular businesses' profits.
22 I mean, they sell the same things small business
23 sell: flowers, all these copycat CDs or whatever,
24 on the streets. So, but there's no enforcement to
25 protect legal businesses. You, do you get my

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point? Yeah.

ANDREA BUTEAU: [laughs] Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: All right,
just--

ANDREA BUTEAU: Thank you for your comment. So, in response, whenever one of our staff members hears of a business is having a challenge with one of the other City agencies, we serve as a liaison to the other City agencies, we have a resource list of all of the responsible persons in each City agency to help resolve issues that they have. And we also have our business outreach team through Bernadette Nation's group, that when an organization--when a business has a challenge with something like the Department of Health, that she sends a staff person to talk to them, to figure out what happened and help them to resolve that, as well. We are always looking at ways that we can try to do more to help those businesses that are struggling. You know, it is our mission and our goal to do as much as we possibly can and it's something that we're always striving to do more of.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [off mic] So,

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2 can you, oh, and the same, not, you have--[on mic]
3 Can you say that you have a liaison person small
4 business people can call to? Like a ombudsman?
5 That they can get to, they can call. "I have such
6 a problem, can you help me?" you know.

7 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, so, the small
8 business owner can call a number of venues, they
9 can call, you know, 311, and we get those calls
10 from 311 directly. We can, they can contact any
11 local merchant association or business improvement
12 district, that contacts us directly. Or we often
13 get requests for assisting businesses through
14 Council Members' offices that we do outreach to
15 them and try our best to assist any way that we
16 can.

17 ELIZABETH DE LEON: Right. That's
18 where our partners are, come in and make the most
19 difference, because I think, in addition to the
20 BIDs, in addition to the partnerships, anyone
21 who's receiving a grant, anyone who walks into our
22 business solution centers, anyone who literally
23 meets us on a daily basis, we are out there giving
24 presentations, talking to people. So, most of the
25 concerns we hear come through those avenues. It's

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2 having the contact with the people who are
3 actually on the ground and the grassroots
4 organizations that are in contact with the
5 business owners on a daily basis, that get the
6 information to us. But anyone who would call our
7 office would definitely, you know, receive the
8 assistance that they require. We call the
9 Department of Health, the Department of
10 Transportation, all, you know, the Department of
11 Sanitation, all the time. And like I said, we do
12 have liaisons, as I said, on every single BID,
13 cover all the five boroughs. So, to be honest
14 with you, there were two members from our staff
15 who wanted to come to the hearing because they do
16 so much work with Avenue NYC, but they're
17 attending two board meetings in two of the BIDs
18 and were unable to make it. So, you know, so it
19 does happen, but we encourage for people to reach
20 out to us, but also reach out to any other SBS
21 staffer.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Okay, so, so,
23 we are hoping that the Mayor can increase your
24 budget [laughter] to so can hire more people.

25 ELIZABETH DE LEON: Us, too!

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[laughs]

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: To, I mean, specifically to become an ombudsman for small business. And I want you guys to be a strong advocate, not just empty talk. We want actions. All right? Thank you.

ELIZABETH DE LEON: [laughs] Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Absolutely. Council Member Chin.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I, I just want to echo and agree with Council Member Koo, because when you look at all the agencies, right, Department of Small Business Services is small business services, so it's really your role to facilitate support. And I, my question to you is that do you have cooperations from the other City agency, Department of, you know, Sanitation, DOT? Because a lot of small business problem involve all the other agencies. Do you have like regular interagency meetings with them? So if a problem does come up to you, that you can help solve it as quickly as possible?

ELIZABETH DE LEON: I mean, we,

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2 like, we have liaisons, like I said, that sit on
3 all the BIDs. But in addition to that, we, our
4 staff does learn from not-for-profit organizations
5 that we're working with--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: No, I'm not
7 talking about the not-for-profit, I'm talking
8 about--

9 ELIZABETH DE LEON: No, no, I--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --the City
11 agencies.

12 ELIZABETH DE LEON: Right, so, what
13 I'm trying to say is that, when the information
14 comes to us, so there's nothing that's scheduled,
15 so there's nothing like, "We meet four times a
16 year." That's what I'm trying to say. When we
17 receive the information, we will make contacts.
18 And if it means that we have to get a couple of
19 agencies together to discuss and come up with a
20 solution and figure out what's going on, and since
21 all the boroughs have like someone who's in charge
22 of all the, the agencies, we know and meet with
23 them on a regular basis because they too attend a
24 lot of the meetings where, that we attend. So,
25 for example, for the spotlight, every single

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2 person, when we went to Flushing, from the
3 agencies that focus on that area, from all of the
4 different City agencies, were present at that
5 meeting. So, all the issues that were raised with
6 Flushing, all the agencies had an opportunity to
7 discuss what they've been working on and how
8 they're trying to solve the issue. So we do this
9 on a regular basis, but if we have to schedule
10 more of an official meeting, we would do that.
11 But it's, it's not like it's scheduled four times
12 a year, it's scheduled as, you know, as, I mean,
13 it's kind of needed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Well, one of
15 the things that I would really urge you to start
16 with is that, is a whole education campaign that
17 involve all the agencies, their responsibility,
18 the services they provide. I mean, even with
19 Sanitation with small business, if small
20 businesses are supposed to have private carting
21 company with stickers or whatever, that people
22 need to do that, Department of Consumer Affairs
23 about people getting receipts. I mean, a lot of
24 them you need to probably do that every year, like
25 a whole reeducation campaign, so people sort of

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2 know what the rules and regulations are, and how
3 can they follow it without just worry about every
4 time a City agency walk is ticket time. You could
5 the education first, and then give people a chance
6 to learn about it; and then when you come back,
7 and you give 'em a ticket, they wouldn't feel as
8 bad because they were told.

9 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: A lot of
11 time, you know, they were not, or not reminded,
12 and so I think that's the service that your agency
13 can provide in coordination with the other City
14 agency that do the enforcement, is really let
15 people know. And I think that's really good
16 customer service for them, but also good for the
17 community, so consumer also know what their rights
18 are.

19 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes, that's a
20 really good comment, as well. I--I think we've
21 been making steps in that direction, and we want
22 to continue doing that. As you probably all know,
23 there's a relatively new business acceleration
24 team that's been charged with helping businesses
25 open in the City. And their main role is to help

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2 them understand how to navigate the government,
3 how to be in compliance with all of the government
4 regulations. So for instance, you know ,if, if a
5 new drycleaner and tailor is opening in the
6 community, that business acceleration team will go
7 there and make sure that they know that they have
8 to post their prices in the public for everybody
9 to see, to make sure that they know all the
10 environmental rules they need to follow. And so,
11 this is one example of a step that we've made in
12 recent years to try to address that concern. And
13 we're always looking for more ways to do that, and
14 create more formal ways to do that, as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I know that
16 your agency's been doing a lot for new businesses,
17 and I just wanted to advocate for the existing
18 business. They need help, and we should not
19 forget about them, that a regular reinforcement of
20 what to ex--the rules and regulations of what to
21 expect, I think that's also very important. So if
22 you could work that in, like a periodic
23 reeducation campaign for our small business, I
24 think that would be helpful. Thank you.

25 ANDREA BUTEAU: Thanks.

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you,
3 Council Member Chin. And it's amazing, you know,
4 how all of the new businesses have had this very
5 catered and tailored walkthrough a process with so
6 much red tape, and the bureaucracy that it's, you
7 know, a, our own revelation of how, you know,
8 we're just burdening the City and its businesses
9 with unnecessary red tape. So that, you know, it
10 doesn't look good on us that we need an NBAT
11 program in order to open doors in New York City.
12 But I'm happy to have the program. And the issue
13 of what happens to the existing business, as
14 Council Member Chin has just mentioned is that
15 they did not get the NBAT service, never had a
16 good experience with government, and continues not
17 to have a good experience with government. And
18 so, what tailored and customized package can we
19 provide them is just as important as the NBAT
20 program that will continue to assist new
21 businesses, leaving behind those others that never
22 received the service. So I just want to, I hope
23 that you can take away this essence of trying to
24 be that liaison that we know you are, and those
25 that have had the pleasure of dealing with

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2 Department of Small Business Services, but you
3 know, there's a good percentage who are out there
4 who don't know you exist, and all the services
5 that you provide. And we need to fix that quickly
6 and efficiently. And we're, we want to be
7 partners in that effort. Because I think we all
8 win when it comes to trying to be advocates on
9 your behalf of helping our businesses and our
10 community. I wanted to focus on, I know we have a
11 lot of participants who want to speak who are
12 present here today. And you know, there's never
13 enough time. We have three different programs
14 that we were trying to highlight today, and that
15 was more than what is allotted for time. But I
16 wanted to just make sure that the two other
17 programs--Neighborhood Retail Leasing program in
18 particular--doesn't get overshadowed. I wanted to
19 understand the applicants who received funding,
20 was their application based on a survey or was
21 there a survey to potentially fill a need that was
22 spearheaded from the ground up, to then see the
23 kind of business that that community was calling
24 for. So, it, you know, I want to understand which
25 one came first, because if we gave the funding

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2 for, to attract new businesses without a survey,
3 then are we really meeting the needs of that
4 particular neighborhood? Or was there a survey
5 first and, on the basis of that survey, we were
6 able to identify area of need.

7 ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure, so, in order
8 for an organization to receive a grant through--
9 so, in order for an organization to get targeted
10 assistance through the retail leasing program,
11 they first need to have secured funding through
12 Avenue NYC for the business attraction project
13 category. So, when an organization applies for
14 the business attraction grant through Avenue NYC,
15 they need to demonstrate in their application that
16 they have assessed what the needs are of the
17 community as one of the questions that we ask.
18 How they've done that, whether or not they've done
19 a survey or market analysis. So that's a basis
20 for providing funding for the actual Avenue NYC
21 grant. From there, we looked at which
22 organizations--so we piloted this last year, there
23 were 14 organizations that received funding for
24 business attraction. We narrowed down which sites
25 would receive the technical assistance through

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2 retail leasing are a number of criteria, based on
3 borough diversity, which, which neighborhood
4 organizations had relationships with property
5 owners that had vacancies that were in retail
6 leasing ready condition and were willing to work
7 with them, so they submitted proof of that as
8 well. That they also had some experience with
9 retail leasing and business attraction in the
10 past, so that our additional assistance could help
11 push them over the edge and provide that training
12 that they, that technical training that they
13 really need to be successful. So, once we
14 identified the four sites, the first step was to
15 do an initial assessment of what the needs were in
16 the community. And that was done with our
17 consultants in a number of different ways. It was
18 started off with a walking tour, looking at an
19 analyzing the retail mix. It was done with a
20 survey as well, and then there was a whole slew of
21 data pulled from national and local databases and
22 websites like Esri, to look at the demographic
23 needs and consumer spending in certain types of
24 retail categories. And what is the lost, the
25 leakage, what we call, or how much money is the

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2 community spending on certain categories that are
3 not provided in the community. So they have to go
4 somewhere else to buy those things. And, and we
5 did a pretty detailed analysis to determine what
6 those needs were before we started to engage in
7 any marketing or outreach to businesses.

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay. And you
9 had mentioned 14 organizations, 99 new businesses
10 have opened since 2011.

11 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: What kind of
13 businesses were attracted? So, I, you know, I'm
14 comfortable and appreciative of the survey, which
15 led to the business attraction. So now if a
16 Checkers, you had mentioned, had come in as one of
17 the new attractions in the testimony, that's what
18 specifically the neighborhood was looking for.

19 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes, absolutely, so
20 I believe you may have it in front of you, I'm not
21 sure, some of our little postcards, I had
22 marketing materials for our retail leasing
23 program. I gave 'em to Reggie. I apologize but
24 I'll make sure you have them--

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Sure.

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2 ANDREA BUTEAU: --but we created,
3 we identified what those needs were.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay, I see
5 here.

6 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes. So, for
7 instance, for Harlem, there was a need for
8 attracting a daycare center, and we created a
9 postcard, a campaign to attract a daycare center,
10 and we opened a daycare center in Harlem. At
11 Checkers, you know, one of the categories
12 identified in Long Island City as a need was
13 eating establishments. There's a whole new
14 population of people coming in, Department of
15 Health moved in there, there's some new
16 developments, where there was nowhere to eat and
17 buy lunch, and so eating establishments was
18 identified as a need. And they've opened a
19 number--

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: But--Andrea,
21 not, not to be so, getting into the minutiae of--

22 ANDREA BUTEAU: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: But you know
24 when we say, "eating establishments," there is no
25 other specific subcategory to say what type of

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eating establishment.

ANDREA BUTEAU: There is, actually.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah. So we have subcategories of full service dining restaurants, we have a subcategory of takeout restaurants, we have delis, grocery store, full service grocery stores and also, we also look at the quality of the food provided, as well, healthy and fresh versus packaged.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right. Very comprehensive.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'm impressed. I do appreciate those details, and just wanting to understand, you know, City Planning we invited, just because there's the Fresh Program, right?

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And the issue of incorporating what would be existing programs that are out there that are not aligning themselves with programs like these. And perhaps they are and we don't know. And so can you tell me more or less whether or not is the Fresh

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2 Program a part of what would be the aligning of
3 the three programs established here?

4 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, so, in any
5 one of the areas that we are targeting for
6 technical assistance, if there are any incentives
7 available for business owners, we include all that
8 information in our retail leasing plan and
9 marketing plans. So, if one of the target areas
10 was also targeted under the Fresh Program as a
11 neighborhood in high need, that was absolutely,
12 that was marketed to potential grocery store
13 owners that, you know, there is a need, we
14 identified, you know, X number of dollars that
15 people are spending outside of the community, that
16 they should be spending right here. And in
17 addition, if you open up a business of that type
18 in this, in this neighborhood, you can access all
19 of these incentives.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Correct.

21 ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah, so that's
22 absolutely a big factor into the retail leasing
23 program.

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: So, could I
25 ask, how many under the Fresh Program,

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supermarkets have opened?

ANDREA BUTEAU: So, under our retail leasing program, we have not secured a grocery store. The Fresh Program data, I mean, maybe Barry or EDC can answer some of those questions on, on that, but--

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you, yes.

ANDREA BUTEAU: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I didn't want to waste your time coming.

Never.

ANDREA BUTEAU: You want to sit here, or--Here just take this.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: There was some logic to your being here.

JOSHUA INTERMA: [laughs] Good afternoon, my name's Joshua Interma [phonetic], Vice President, New York City Economic Development Corporation. And the Fresh Program is a program that's administered jointly by the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Department of City Planning, as well as the Department of Health. Since the Fresh Program started, there's been over a dozen supermarkets that have been

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2 funded or received the benefits. I don't have the
3 exact number of the, how many have opened or
4 expanded to date, but I can follow up and get you
5 that information.

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CHAIRPERSON REYNA: That would be
7 fabulous. I, I know that Bushwick is one of the
8 food desert areas--

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JOSHUA INTERMA: Right.

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CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --in my
11 district, and that have been identified, targeted.
12 And I, I'm not seeing the program truly be
13 effective in the sense of attracting businesses to
14 open that specific--or expand that specific area
15 of interest. And so I just wanted to understand
16 whether or not it's just a failure on the end of
17 organized efforts locally that have not taken
18 advantage of these programs, application
19 processes, or where a lack of awareness--or is it
20 the reverse, they are applying but perhaps they're
21 not--

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JOSHUA INTERMA: Yeah, I think you
23 raise a really interesting point, and I think
24 through the pilot of Fresh over the last year-and-
25 a-half, we've learned a number of things and we're

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2 working with City Planning right now to amend some
3 of the zoning texts, to address some of the
4 barriers that exist and why we haven't seen more
5 supermarkets opening. And this relates to some of
6 the requirements around parking, the requirements
7 around the, the declarative position of the loan
8 and the role that Fresh and the IDA benefits that
9 are able to be provided to that. So, we're
10 looking to address some of the, the barriers and
11 why we haven't seen more supermarkets in some of
12 the targeted neighborhoods that we're focused on,
13 such as Bushwick. But it's somewhat unrelated to
14 the neighborhoods and the retail leasing program.
15 Certainly they're marketing the program, but it's
16 not because of the efforts of that program that's,
17 that have been successful in other sectors.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right. And do
19 we know if there's other targeted Fresh food, food
20 deserts associated to Fresh food program that have
21 had the opportunity to take advantage of these
22 programs to attract businesses in that specific
23 area of interest?

24 JOSHUA INTERMA: So what I'm
25 hearing you say, Council Member, is we should

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coordinate between the two.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Yes.

[laughter]

JOSHUA INTERMA: In a very precise way and--

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Correct.

JOSHUA INTERMA: --and I think that's something we can work towards in the coming year.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Fabulous.

Fabulous to hear. I ... I have five pages of questions, I don't know, and who's--

ANDREA BUTEAU: I have answers for all of them. [laughter]

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Fabulous.

ANDREA BUTEAU: I wrote them all down.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And we don't have, you know, unfortunately 24 hours to ask them all. But I would like if you have further elaboration on these questions, if you could send them our way, we will share them with Members of the Committee, and all who are here who are interested to call our office or get in touch with

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2 my Counsel and Policy Analyst, Matt and Faith.
3 But I want to hear from the audience and I know
4 that we're stretched for time, so I want to make
5 sure that I thank you all for being here, in
6 particular on behalf of these three programs and
7 looking forward to just continuing our efforts
8 together in providing the best services out there
9 for all small business. Thank you.

10 ANDREA BUTEAU: Thank you so much.

11 JOSHUA INTERMA: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'd like to
13 call the next panel: Dr. Goodman, of the 161st
14 BID; William Wilkins from the LDC in East New
15 York; [pause] Simone Price, from Coro Alumni--Oh,
16 from Sutphin Boulevard BID, Acoro--Coro Alumni--
17 I'm Latino-izing that; Ricardi Calixte, Coro
18 Alumni from the Queens Economic Development
19 Corporation; and I'm reading off, I don't know if
20 all four are here. [background comment: "Yes."]
21 Fantastic, I'll stop there. [pause, background
22 noise] You may begin.

23 CARY GOODMAN: Good afternoon,
24 Chairperson Reyna. So happy to be here, I'm sorry
25 that Council Member Mathieu Eugene had to leave.

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2 I remember proudly in finally being at the Council
3 when he was first sworn and I'm sorry not, that we
4 haven't yet seen Council Member James with whom I
5 worked very closely when I was leading the Anti-
6 Dropout Campaign for the Black and Latino Caucus,
7 as you well know. But thank you for hearing us
8 today.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Absolutely.

10 CARY GOODMAN: I now work at the
11 161st Street Business Improvement District, at
12 Yankee Stadium. We have been a recipient of the
13 Avenue NYC grant for the past three years, our
14 first three years of operation. And I'm here
15 today to tell you that it has been a fantastic
16 boost for our neighborhood. As you might see from
17 the article that I distributed in actually today's
18 Daily News, we have partnered with The Bronx
19 Museum of the Arts and the Yankees to bring
20 baseball as an art form to the district and to use
21 that as a vehicle for commercial revitalization.
22 And this year in particular--well, the first year
23 we had Orlando Zepeda, who's a member of the
24 Baseball Hall of Fame, and the Hispanic Baseball
25 Hall of Fame, as our guests. Last year--and the

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2 Borough President opened the exhibit; it was only
3 one day. Second year, last year, our Avenue NYC
4 grant allowed us to operate for one week, and we
5 had an exhibit on the negro leagues, and that
6 exhibit was very widely praised and distributed,
7 the information that came from it. And this year,
8 what we're doing is we're building on those two
9 successes of the negro leagues and Hispanic
10 Baseball Hall of Fame, and we're doing a program
11 which incorporates the integration of baseball in
12 the--by the way, New York City's the capital of
13 the integration of baseball, and sometimes I think
14 we overlook how important that was. In fact, I
15 mentioned in my prepared remarks that, you know,
16 everybody thinks of Jackie Robinson and the
17 integration of baseball, there's another part to
18 that's often overlooked and it comes from The
19 Bronx. The person who owned the Brooklyn Dodgers,
20 who actually broke the boycott against hiring
21 African-American ball players, came from The
22 Bronx, Walter O'Malley, and he's also in the
23 Baseball Hall of Fame. So, we're very proud in
24 our district about our relationship to the, to the
25 sport, and the sport's relationship to American

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2 culture, and all the offshoots of its civil rights
3 equality issues and the like. Anyway, I simply
4 want to urge you to support and ask the Council to
5 support, the Avenue NYC program in every way
6 possible. They're very, very small grants, our
7 BID is a very, very small BID, the budget's under
8 a quarter of a million dollars. And as you noted
9 from Commissioner De Leon's testimony, all the
10 money for the Avenue NYC grant comes as a result
11 of a federal program, the community development
12 block grant. There is no City Council money
13 allocated for any of the six areas that Director
14 Buteau mentioned, as well. We'd love to see some
15 infusion into that funding stream. And I'm sure
16 you're well aware that President, this week, sort
17 of symbolizing the importance of the small
18 business community, has now recommended to the
19 Congress that he will elevate the Small Business
20 Administration to a cabinet level position. So, I
21 mean, we're in a, we're in a very opportunistic
22 environment for small businesses, and I want to
23 say, you know, that the 161st Street BID
24 appreciates the attention you've given to this as
25 the Chair. And hope that working with the Mayor's

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2 Office and SBS, the funds available for expanding
3 these programs will be provided.

4 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I just wanted
5 to thank Dr. Goodman for the history, as well as
6 just making us further aware of baseball
7 integration and making sure that we do recognize
8 as a City Council how important commercial
9 revitalization is. For years, we were funding at
10 100 percent the commercial revitalization program,
11 to the point where we couldn't do it anymore. And
12 so, this is perhaps an opportunity for a
13 reengagement of what could be a partnership, but
14 it's good to know that the City Administration is
15 reinvesting once again. And so, you know, there's
16 a balance here we have to strike and we've been
17 able to do other things in partnership with the
18 Department of Small Business Services, as well as
19 the Economic Development Corporation and I believe
20 that in the Assistant Commissioner's statement,
21 our Speaker funds a portion, supports this program
22 at \$15,000, just as--correct, in the budget--and
23 so there is, you know, as far as the Speaker is
24 concerned, an effort to help support the program.

25 CARY GOODMAN: Yeah, and of course,

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2 our local Council Members, in our case our Council
3 Members are Councilwoman Arroyo and Foster, are
4 very supportive of the work of--in particular of
5 the Avenue NYC program. They both have
6 participated publicly and, you know, regularly
7 communicate with our office about what's going on.
8 But I think the Avenue NYC program in particular
9 giving small businesses a chance to do things like
10 marketing themselves, you know, a deli, how much
11 marketing expertise or resources do they have?
12 But working with SBS's assistance, there are just--
13 -well, I'll give you an example, we, we had Jay-Z
14 up at Yankee Stadium. And we decided that since
15 one of our stores, one of our restaurants, was
16 named with a Z'Novia, we would invent a new drink
17 called the Jay-Z'Novia, and people would come to
18 the district to try it out while Jay-Z was
19 performing. And in fact, it became a radio
20 commercial and it went viral and it became a story
21 in the Daily News. And the small little
22 restaurant that actually had nothing to do with
23 Jay-Z flourished as a consequence. So I think,
24 you know, a pot of money where BIDs can try to
25 help those small businesses market themselves in

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2 ways that they're just absolutely beyond their
3 capacity to do, would be extremely beneficial
4 going forward.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Absolutely.
6 Thank you. Mr. Wilkins.

7 WILLIAM WILKINS: Yes, good
8 afternoon, it's good to be in your presence again.
9 Just a matter of some housekeeping issues. As
10 Councilwoman Chin had indicated, there is a need
11 for more integration with our Police Department,
12 and to SBS's credit, once a year all of the BID
13 managers have a meeting that's designed by SBS and
14 it brings the commanding officers for ten police
15 precincts in East Brooklyn with Chief Nelson, and
16 we discuss all relevant issues in the BID. This
17 is an exceptional open door policy for us to
18 articulate some of the concerns in our respective
19 BIDs, and it's top down. To her point, what might
20 be more beneficial or model that we should look
21 at, is maybe inviting three or four of our area
22 businesses to come who are captains and stewards
23 that can share the information for their
24 respective neighbors. So that's an excellent idea
25 not only to BID managers, I'm suggesting us be

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2 able to bring some of the BID businesses. In
3 addition to that, Commissioner indicated SBS made
4 an assessment survey and they're looking at social
5 media networking and marketing. I would strongly
6 encourage them to attend our ninth annual Total
7 Women's Business Conference, being held March 22nd
8 at St. Francis College and we have Google and some
9 of the top minds in this whole social networking
10 realm. So we're on the ground and we're a little
11 bit ahead of that. Now I'd like to just read my
12 prepared statement. As you know, my name is Bill
13 Wilkins and I'm the Director of Industrial
14 Development for the Local Development Corporation
15 of East New York.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'm sorry--

17 WILLIAM WILKINS: Mm-hmm. Yes, you
18 do.

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --do we have a
20 copy of your--

21 WILLIAM WILKINS: Yes, you do.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay.

23 WILLIAM WILKINS: And I'm also the
24 East Brooklyn BID Manager. I submit to you today
25 that Department of Small Business Services provide

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2 outstanding support top to bottom as it relates to
3 BID entities. And this stems from the
4 Commissioner to the rank and file and all of the
5 employees. The program staff, they're
6 knowledgeable, they're resources, they're
7 responsive, they're professional and they're
8 passionate in their delivery of service and should
9 be commended. However, my concern today is with
10 the Avenue NYC program and more importantly that
11 at-risk communities are being sacrificed as we
12 experience a reduction in government funding on
13 the local, state and federal level. As indicated
14 in Fiscal Year 2010, there was \$2 million in the
15 budget and about 58 organizations, 54 funded, and
16 in 2011, it was reduced to 48. More often than
17 not, I am discovering government agencies
18 allocating disproportionately resources to
19 gentrified communities and ignoring those with the
20 greatest need. Case in point, New Lots Avenue,
21 which was not regranted in Fiscal Year 2011. The
22 LDC worked very closely with the New Lots Merchant
23 Triangle Association, and I'd just like to
24 visually show you that last year we finally opened
25 a \$25 million, 87 unit, low income housing--

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2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mr. Goodman, if
3 you don't mind just holding that for him--

4 CARY GOODMAN: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --and speak
6 into the mic, because we're going to lose you.

7 WILLIAM WILKINS: Okay. Now, I
8 don't, that's great, I don't want, I don't want to
9 be lost. But this is an anchor on New Lots
10 Avenue, \$26 million has not been spent on New Lots
11 Avenue in the last 20 dec--in the last two
12 decades. We were also able to recycle dollars in
13 our community with a capital budget of \$25
14 million, \$5 million was spent with area businesses
15 in the building trade that also hire people
16 locally. In addition to that, we created, as I
17 submitted in your package, three newsletters--

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you, Mr.
19 Goodman.

20 WILLIAM WILKINS: --which I think
21 is a--thank you--a visually attractive logo and
22 image. We developed a system to place decals in
23 the windows of our merchants. We also ... and you
24 can hold this, too [crosstalk] we also developed
25 an environmentally friendly shopping bag for, for

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2 New Lots Avenue which the merchants and everyone
3 loves, and you know, is our way of thinking green.
4 In addition to that, we donated turkeys, we had
5 turkey drives. We also had finally in East New
6 York, we didn't have to go to Rockefeller Center
7 this year, we had a tree lighting ceremony. And
8 it's really grown, now we also have created a
9 plaza which I've attached for you to review, and
10 we also had an outstanding performance by some of
11 our area children, and we also increased the
12 police patrols. LDC also received a good rating
13 in our midyear and our year-end report. Not
14 unsatisfactory, not fair, not poor, but good. SBS
15 rarely gives out excellents. In all of our
16 performance metrics, we received goods. So, I say
17 that if Avenue NYC funding is not designed for
18 commercial strips like New Lots Avenue with the
19 greatest need, then for whom? I would argue that
20 gentrified communities that have wealth, educated
21 citizens, resources, services and multiple choices
22 when it comes to their shopping appetites.
23 Lastly, with Phase II of Gateway being evident,
24 and the strong possibility of a Walmart or a
25 national chain coming to East New York, would it

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2 not make sense to support our mom-and-pop shops on
3 the ground in an at-risk community? In
4 conclusion, last week at the business public
5 library, they held their annual business plan
6 competition. Out of the eleven finalists, five
7 were clients of the LDC; the top three winners
8 that received \$25,000 in grant funding, were
9 clients of the LDC's. But at this point in time,
10 I receive zero dollars in funding from the
11 Department of Small Business Services.

12 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you, Mr.
13 Wilkins. And I'm not surprised that you came
14 prepared with the product of which you were so
15 successful in implementing for the health and
16 economic vitality of your area, through the LDC.
17 And I just wanted to understand the most recent
18 application you had submitted was a second phase
19 to all of your work? Or was that a new project
20 overall?

21 WILLIAM WILKINS: Well, it was, we
22 started with the formation of the merchants
23 association, and we actually obtained their legal
24 structure, and we, in December we just, I mean,
25 went through the community board, and in

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2 November/December we had the plaza. So, a lot of
3 the impetus of the original funding in Fiscal Year
4 2010 went to the work product that you see before
5 you. But it's ongoing. And especially in lieu of
6 the need of us supporting our mom-and-pop shops,
7 the only two commercial strips in East New York.
8 You could argue three and say Pitkin Avenue, but
9 close to Gateway is New Lots Avenue and
10 Pennsylvania Avenue.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

12 WILLIAM WILKINS: And if we do
13 have, when they're in the ground and create a
14 national chain, that's going to erode the revenues
15 of our mom-and-pop businesses, who have been the
16 backbone to provide services for our residents,
17 for them to be able to have a shopping experience.
18 So, all of this great work was created, a \$25
19 million project to anchor it, and a lot of the
20 exponential benefits that we will receive going
21 forward has now been discontinued.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And your
23 projected years of completion would be how much
24 longer with no support coming to in, be infused
25 through funding? Does the lack of funding stop

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2

all the work?

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WILLIAM WILKINS: Well, to be

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honest, it doesn't, it's just that we're being

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more creative of doing more with less, but we're

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stretched to the level that it's pro bono. We've

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personally taken reductions in our salaries, and

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it's affected us and our families, and we don't

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really know how much longer we can continue with

10

the level of service that we have provided for our

11

community. We've been there for 34 years. I

12

don't know how much longer we can continue,

13

because of all of the business development

14

services we, we provide, successfully, and we

15

receive zero dollars in funding from the

16

Department of Small Business Services.

17

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay. Thank

18

you very much, Mr. Wilkins. And you know, I am

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familiar with your work and evident today, as

20

evidenced today, and I know that we have seen

21

great strides occurring in the East New York area.

22

And we want to see that supported. And so, we

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will continue to have conversations as to what we

24

need to do in order to continue supporting that.

25

I'd like to have the next speaker.

1
2 SIMONE PRICE: Great. To the
3 Chair, Council Member Reyna, and the members the
4 Small Business Committee, good afternoon. My name
5 is Simone Price, I'm the Executive Director of the
6 Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District,
7 located in Jamaica, New York. On behalf of the
8 Sutphin Boulevard BID board of directors, it's 136
9 retail businesses and 36 property owners, I would
10 like to thank you for this opportunity to offer my
11 testimony on how the Avenue NYC and Neighborhood
12 Leadership Programs have helped strengthen the
13 Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District's
14 retail corridor. Under the leadership of Robert
15 Walsh, the Department of Small Business Services'
16 Avenue NYC and Neighborhood Leadership Programs
17 have added tremendous support to our commercial
18 corridor. These programs have enabled us to
19 provide our district with the same level of
20 services as BIDs that are triple our size. The
21 following programs were sponsored through, were
22 sponsored by Avenue NYC. We have our coupon
23 passbook. This coupon passbook offered food,
24 retail and service discounts at 24 merchants
25 located within the district. Over 30,000 coupon

1
2 passbooks were distributed through this
3 initiative, in an effort to raise the community's
4 awareness of the products and services that are
5 available within our corridor. We have our map
6 and district guide, this guide is a publication
7 with a listing of retail services and contact
8 information for all members within the Sutphin
9 Boulevard BID's commercial corridor. Over 35,000
10 of these guides were distributed. We have our
11 Ambassadors Program. We were able to create ten
12 part time seasonal positions through this program.
13 Our ambassadors greet and interact with visitors,
14 residents, and business owners, along the
15 commercial corridor. They give directions, they
16 distribute information, they also distribute out
17 map and district guides and coupon passbooks. Our
18 spotlight on Sutphin Boulevard BID program, which
19 you actually have in front of you, that was an
20 initiative highlighted, highlighting the array of
21 services that are available within the BID's
22 commercial corridor. We were able to interview
23 twelve retailers and had their stories published
24 in the southeast Queens press, the Queens
25 Chronicle, or the Daily, the New York Daily News.

1
2 Business owners reported that they experienced an
3 increase in sales and services after the
4 publication. Another initiative that we were able
5 to do was our - - marketing piece, which you also
6 have in front of you. This marketing piece, it
7 highlights where someone can grab a quick bite to
8 eat, parking rules and rates, free Wi-Fi services
9 in the park, stories within the district that
10 accept coupons and retailers within the corridor
11 that offer office services such as notarizing,
12 copying and faxing documents. 5,000 of these - -
13 break pieces were distributed. The Sutphin
14 Boulevard BID was awarded another Avenue NYC grant
15 this fiscal year to continue its ambassadors
16 program, and distribute map and district guides
17 throughout the downtown Jamaica community. The
18 BID is excited to announce three new programs that
19 are also being funded through the 2012 Avenue NYC
20 grant program, which is a Taste of Sutphin
21 Program. It's a, we also have a value card
22 program and we're going to be doing a BID webcast.
23 All of the aforementioned programs are new
24 initiatives created as a result of the Avenue, of
25 Avenue NYC funding. In other words, prior to

1 Avenue NYC funding, these programs did not exist.
2
3 These programs support small businesses in a
4 struggling economic climate, the success of each
5 program is measured by merchant participation and
6 serving retailers. Moving on to neighborhood, the
7 Neighborhood Leadership Program, I was actually
8 part of the inaugural Neighborhood Leadership
9 Program, and that program has equipped me with the
10 tools, experiences and networks to lead my
11 organization to greater heights. Coros
12 Experiential Learning Model makes their program
13 unique and practical to the work that I do on a
14 daily basis. For instance, my commercial corridor
15 struggles with negative perception issues. As a
16 result, it was useful to have a case study on a
17 commercial corridor with similar issues, that we
18 were able to visit and to develop a strategic plan
19 for as a solution. Furthermore, Neighborhood
20 Leadership was instrumental in connecting program
21 participants to field experts and resources that
22 would help problem solve. So, let's use the
23 struggling commercial corridor for an example, the
24 one that we visited, as a group assignment, my
25 group was asked to meet with the Vice President of

1
2 Project for Public Spaces. During this meeting I
3 learned that negative uses don't have to be
4 eliminated to have a thriving retail corridor;
5 rather, if you mix good uses with bad uses, your
6 good uses will overshadow bad uses. In other
7 words, you may be so preoccupied with your
8 designation, if you're going to a concert or a
9 show, that you become unaware of or pay little
10 attention to negative uses around you. Moreover,
11 I learned that you can turn any area into a
12 positive or good use public space. Meeting with
13 Project for Public Spaces, meeting with Project
14 for Public Spaces gave me ideas and hope for my
15 commercial corridor, through mock exercises, peer
16 consultancies and group interviews, I graduated
17 Neighborhood Leadership with a new confidence.
18 This program helped me find solutions to difficult
19 situations, I was coupled with individuals across
20 the five boroughs in similar leadership roles that
21 shared my sentiments, and were eager to find
22 solutions together. I was taught best practices
23 through interviews with top professionals in
24 relevant fields, I've learned that leaders have
25 courageous conversations and that they are to push

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2 people only at a rate that they can tolerate.
3 Most importantly, I've learned how to use my
4 program cohorts as a network, the significance of
5 preparedness, to address issues, to address
6 important issues before they become urgent issues,
7 and to strategize to make the most efficient use
8 of my time. And again, I just want to thank you
9 guys for your continued support with these
10 different programs.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you so
12 much for your powerful words. I was able to just
13 capture my favorite, "You can only lead people to
14 what they can tolerate." And so, I'll continue to
15 remember that. The question that I had, and I
16 believe you answered it in your point on number
17 four, I believe, was your participation relevant
18 or correlated to an increase in sales for
19 businesses, because essentially that's what's
20 going to improve what would be the commercial
21 corridor, so that in the particular stories that
22 were featured, the business owners, saw a direct
23 benefit. Is that the case throughout the corridor
24 that you manage?

25 SIMONE PRICE: Not necessarily. I

1
2 find that the merchants that do participate, they
3 benefit greatly from these programs. But I also
4 find that as we continue to do these programs,
5 more and more merchants want to participate. So,
6 one case in particular, we had a hair salon, they
7 actually were featured in the New York Daily News,
8 and because of their feature, people walked in,
9 they were familiar, you know, with the rates and
10 the services that they provided, and perhaps they
11 just not, didn't know that that hair salon
12 existed.

13 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Correct.

14 SIMONE PRICE: But just the
15 exposure--

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Correct.

17 SIMONE PRICE: --helped with just
18 increased sales. And I think the more people
19 participate, the more you'll see an increase in
20 pedestrians coming in to receive different
21 services for, within our commercial corridor.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: The three
23 programs that--you only participated in two,
24 correct, out of the three? The Avenue NYC and--

25 SIMONE PRICE: See, yes.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And the
3 Neighborhood Leadership Program.

4 SIMONE PRICE: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Is there a
6 reason you did not participate in the third
7 program, or is it just a matter of necessity to
8 complete the other two and the third you'll leave
9 at a later date?

10 SIMONE PRICE: Right, it's all,
11 it's relevant, it's all relative to the needs of
12 my community, my constituency. We had a need for
13 place making, so that's what we applied to. And
14 we were accepted, we received the grant for place
15 making. And with the Neighborhood Leadership
16 Program, that's something that I felt would
17 benefit our commercial corridor as well, along, me
18 individ--personally, and then also for the
19 commercial corridor. So, it was relative to the
20 needs of my district.

21 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And your
22 vacancy rate?

23 SIMONE PRICE: We're at about a
24 three percent vacancy rate.

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Which is

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average.

SIMONE PRICE: Which is average, and it's, and it's been pretty consistent. So, as stores, as stores have closed down, the new stores have opened up in that space. But we've kind of leveled at about a three percent--I want to say over the past three-and-a-half years.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm. So that's not necessarily the program that would best fit your constituency.

SIMONE PRICE: Exactly.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you very much for your testimony. Next.

RICARDI CALIXTE: Thank you, Councilwoman Diana Reyna. I definitely want to extend, you know, appreciation for this opportunity to, you know, provide testimony on how we can strengthen our retail corridors in New York City. My name is Ricardi Calixte and I'm the Director of Neighborhood Economic Development at Queens Economic Development Corporation. QEDC is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1977 to provide neighborhood revitalization services to various neighborhoods in Queens County. Our

1 mission is to create and retain jobs through a
2 program that grows our neighborhoods, assists more
3 businesses and promotes tourism and business
4 development. As we deal in all aspects of
5 business development, we have a good understanding
6 of the challenges facing small business owners and
7 conditions affecting economic growth in our
8 shopping districts. While it is impossible to
9 touch on all these issues in the limited time that
10 I have to present, I would like to point out some
11 of the main concerns that our clients face and put
12 in some recommendations. The basis of my
13 testimony will address items comprised within
14 three key categories: small business assistance,
15 retail corridor improvement and leadership
16 development. So, indeed small businesses are the
17 backbone of a thriving local economy. We must
18 provide the necessary support to help new and
19 existing small businesses maximize the capacities
20 to provide needed goods and services. Starting
21 and operating a business in New York City can be
22 quite a daunting task. Many aspiring
23 entrepreneurs are not able to grasp the
24 comprehensive process involved in establishing a
25

1
2 new business. And while the creation of the
3 online business resource center, NYC Business
4 Express, provides an additional tool for
5 entrepreneurs, it, it cannot replace the need for
6 meeting with a professional business advisor that
7 can give you immediate feedback and answer
8 questions. The New York City business solutions
9 centers and technical assistance providers such as
10 QEDC, which provides guidance and training in all
11 - - of business development, need, need to receive
12 greater support. Innovative entrepreneurs need
13 access to the capital to start new venture, a new
14 venture. We should continue to grow and support
15 our network of business incubators that prepare
16 small businesses to go out and occupy vacant
17 storefronts. Many of the business incentive
18 programs of the City do not apply to the mom-and-
19 pop type establishments that keep our neighborhood
20 corridors thriving. In my role at QEDC, I have
21 constant dialogue with existing business owners in
22 various commercial districts in Queens. A few
23 common themes frequently arise in those
24 discussions. Among these are, is what they view
25 as excessive business taxes and fees, over

1
2 regulation and red tape at City agencies, and
3 unwarranted fines. Most recently, one of the
4 merchant organizations that I work with in
5 Richmond Hill notified us that the Department of
6 Sanitation removed several litter baskets along
7 Liberty Avenue, and have since been issuing
8 summonses for sidewalk trash to multiple
9 businesses. In another example, we have a client
10 who bought a building in order to open up a new
11 catering hall, and we connected the client to the
12 City's NBAT program, and while they were granted
13 construction permits through NBAT, a technical
14 issue with, occurring with the Department of
15 Buildings have not allowed them to proceed with
16 the project. The owner has made several attempts
17 to resolve the issue with DOB, with little success
18 in getting direct feedback regarding his case. In
19 the meantime, he continues to pay a mortgage on a
20 property with no revenue coming in to offset the
21 costs. These types of incidents lead to
22 disconnect between merchants and City government,
23 causing many business owners to become discouraged
24 and miss out on economic opportunities. Thriving
25 retail corridors often some have common

1
2 characteristic. They are clean, pedestrian
3 friendly, offer a heterogeneous mix of retail
4 options, they're accessible public transportation
5 and they're able to attract shoppers beyond the
6 local customer base. In order to strengthen New
7 York City's retail corridors, planners and City
8 officials should focus on initiatives that aid in
9 achieving these characteristics. Capital funding
10 should be used to make physical improvements to
11 our retail corridors to ensure that they are
12 attractive, safe and conducive to doing business.
13 Improvements to our transportation infrastructure,
14 which allows for multimodal access to shopping
15 districts are of vital importance. We have a
16 growing and aging population that needs to be
17 taken into consideration in future designs of our
18 landscape and transportation system. Many retail
19 corridors are falling prey to the economic
20 downturn, and in support of the overall growth to
21 create new jobs, City government should work in
22 collaboration with business organizations and real
23 estate professionals to attract new businesses to
24 our retail corridors. Our retail corridors need
25 to be marketable in order to attract new

1
2 investments. Often, this task is left up to
3 volunteer based merchant organizations that lack
4 the capacity and the resources to effectively
5 promote their businesses. The City should work to
6 provide more support and technical assistance
7 services to these organizations. In most cases,
8 the resources aimed at improving economic activity
9 on our corridors are coordinated at the
10 neighborhood level, by locally based business
11 development organization including merchant
12 associations, local development corporations, and
13 business improvement districts. City officials
14 should continue to work with these organizations
15 and provide the necessary support to help them
16 with keeping their districts vibrant. In order to
17 be effective, these business organizations need
18 strong leaders that know their communities well,
19 and understand the intricacies of local economic
20 development. It is very important that these
21 leaders have access to proper training and
22 technical assistance to develop strong programs
23 that improve neighborhood corridors. And to this
24 end, I would like to commend the Department of
25 Small Business Services for supporting the

1
2 Neighborhood Leadership Program in partnership
3 with Coro, add the wonderful opportunity of being
4 a participant in the first cohort at this program
5 this past year, which is a five month part time
6 training program that provide neighborhood leaders
7 with skills and experience needed to lead change
8 and improve their communities. I have personally
9 gained a better understanding of community
10 planning, networking, public speaking, consensus
11 building and have applied these new skills to my
12 work at QEDC. I encourage you to continue to
13 support these types of programs and continue to
14 work with community leaders in developing
15 successful strategies to strengthen our
16 neighborhood retail corridors. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you very
18 much. I'd like to just extend my, send my regards
19 to Seth Bornstein and the wonderful work that QEDC
20 does on multiple levels, not just retail but the
21 industrial development in Queens and--Queens has
22 led the City in job development, and so that is an
23 amazing result of the work of QEDC.

24 RICARDI CALIXTE: Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I have no

1
2 further questions. I wanted to make sure that I
3 tailored each person before I forgot what it was
4 that I wanted to ask, and so I do appreciate the
5 time you've taken to support these programs,
6 because if you hadn't been here, I wouldn't think
7 the program would work. And so to hear from
8 alumni from the local development corporations,
9 from the economic development corporations, at the
10 local level, is very important that this program
11 is a bottom up, as our Assistant Commissioner had
12 mentioned. But coming from your mouths is more,
13 brings a level of confidence that the work is
14 being done and applied in such a way. Thank you.

15 PANEL: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I'd like to
17 call the last panel: Bob Zuckerman, from the LES
18 BID; Angelina Ramirez, from the Washington Heights
19 BID; and Daniel Murphy, from the Pitkin Avenue
20 BID. [pause, background noise] Whenever you'd
21 like to begin.

22 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Good afternoon,
23 Chair Council Member Reyna, and Council Members of
24 the New York City Council Committee on Small
25 Business. Thank you for the opportunity to offer

1
2 my testimony on Avenue NYC, as well as the
3 Neighborhood Leadership Program. My name is
4 Angelina Ramirez, and I am the Executive Director
5 of the Washington Heights Business Improvement
6 District, which is located in uptown Manhattan.
7 The Washington Heights BID supports approximately
8 250 commercial storefronts in a 29 block
9 commercial district along 181st Street, from
10 Amsterdam to Fort Washington, and surrounding
11 blocks on St. Nick and Broadway. So the
12 Washington Heights BID received Avenue NYC grants
13 for place making and merchant organizing in Fiscal
14 Year 2011 and 2012. The Avenue NYC grant provides
15 organizations with the necessary funds to be able
16 to implement critical programs that help improve
17 our overall City. For the Washington Heights BID,
18 these funds were used to promote and assist local
19 small businesses. For example, we executed
20 merchant outreach and events, the Washington
21 Heights BID provided small businesses with the
22 opportunity to network, to provide feedback, to
23 discuss needs, as well as to discuss synergistic
24 opportunities, such as affordable radio and social
25 media. From an advertising standpoint, we had a

1
2 partnership with the Manhattan Times, which is a
3 local bilingual newspaper, and the BID created
4 monthly advertising initiatives to encourage
5 shoppers to patronize local independent retailers.
6 We also provided small businesses with continuing
7 education by holding courses that help local
8 businesses further their education, whether it was
9 marketing 101, financial planning, improving their
10 credit. And we also are in the process of
11 executing a beautification project, which will
12 meant the maintenance of tree pits, through tree
13 guards and just overall cleanliness. The BID also
14 utilized these Avenue NYC funds to assist with the
15 relaunching of the organization in an effort to
16 obtain awareness and brand recognition. From a
17 branding standpoint, the BID created a new, modern
18 and quintessential logo which can be found on all
19 of our advertising and marketing materials, light
20 poll banners, sanitation crew uniforms and
21 equipment. We also executed many events in 2010
22 and '11 to promote the BID. For example, we had
23 an inaugural reception to showcase the new office
24 and to review BID mission statement, objectives
25 and marketing programs. We also had, have had

1
2 lifetime establishment forums, focusing on
3 assisting businesses with an understanding of City
4 regulations in order to avoid summons. We also
5 executed holiday events, such as a tree lighting
6 ceremony and Thanksgiving turkey give-away. And
7 we also are in the process of updating our BID
8 website through the Avenue NYC program. In terms
9 of Neighborhood Leadership Program, I am going to
10 talk about my participation. When I applied to
11 Coro's Neighborhood Leadership Program in December
12 of 2010, I had just joined the Washington Heights
13 BID a couple of months prior. So from that
14 standpoint, it really was a great training. At
15 that point, the program would, I thought it would
16 be a great opportunity to network and to perhaps
17 gain some insights into working with City
18 agencies, and boy was I right. Looking back, I
19 can honestly say it was one of the smartest things
20 that I have ever done. The Neighborhood
21 Leadership Program provided me with the necessary
22 tools, experiences and particularly networks, to
23 develop new ways to lead and implement change
24 within Washington Heights, within the BID, and
25 within the overall community, especially with an

1
2 important and very sensitive topic, which is
3 street vending. Street vending, throughout the
4 City, the number of street vendors, both legal and
5 illegal, has increased tremendously over the past
6 few years. Their impact has been particularly
7 acute along 181st Street. Initially, the BID was
8 charged with finding a solution to the issue.
9 However, after participating in the Neighborhood
10 Leadership Program, it was very clear that a
11 holistic community wide approach would be most
12 effective in order to have success with any
13 strategy. And so now the BID along with the
14 community board, which is Community Board 12,
15 created a taskforce of various stakeholders,
16 including elected officials, to work on a street
17 vendor strategy. To date the taskforce has
18 conducted an inventory of all local street
19 vendors, and in the long term the taskforce is
20 working on a plan to relocate vendors to a
21 location that is more conducive to the community.

22 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you very
23 much for your testimony. I wanted to just ask
24 you, Ms. Ramirez, your ability to stay in touch
25 with--well you haven't, you haven't completed the

1
2 course, right, you started--no, yes, you have,
3 it's--

4 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --we're in year
6 2012.

7 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: So, you're an
9 alumni and so therefore, have used, remained in
10 touch with your peers from that class.

11 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Oh, absolutely.
12 Whether in fact I, not only, I have a great
13 relationship with Coro to the point where they
14 have a new program that's focused on immigration.
15 And they had a course in my office in Washington
16 Heights, since we have a great conference room.
17 So from that standpoint, definitely keep in touch.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And so you've
19 become a resource for Coro as well.

20 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Absolutely. As
21 well as a mentor as well, just as I was provided a
22 mentor during the program, I have now become a
23 mentor as well. And in terms of my cohorts,
24 absolutely, whether it's calling, you know, Blaze
25 on the phone and asking him about his

1
2 beautification program, which I'm in the middle of
3 doing with my tree pits; or whether it's helping,
4 you know, Kevin from the Metro Tech BID to help
5 him with sponsorship opportunities, we are all
6 very close. The weekend retreat in particular,
7 which was the first week in January, was three
8 amazing days. Very chock full of material, and
9 very time constrained, but an amazing opportunity
10 for bonding, where we not only learned about
11 ourselves but about the communities that we serve,
12 and the needs that we have. So, since that first
13 retreat in, at the end of the January, we've all
14 been very, very close. And we also have events, I
15 want to say it seems like it's, now recently it's
16 been every two or three months, they try to keep
17 us very much connected with each other.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm. And do
19 you, on your own, get connected, or is it via Coro
20 as an alumni?

21 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: It's both. So
22 Coro does establish alumni events. They've even
23 asked us to participate in the process of the
24 selection of the new cohort that's going to start
25 now. But also, in terms of, we keep in touch with

1
2 our own distribution lists of emails of our past
3 cohort. And of course, just by calling, which
4 we've actually spoken of events, you know, that
5 we, that I know she executed a fashion event last
6 year, and it's something that I want to do next
7 year. So, we've been in contact. So, whether
8 it's organized or just picking up the phone, we're
9 all, it's a very accessible network.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm. And as
11 far as your Avenue NYC grant, I notice the--your
12 BID was established when?

13 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: It was
14 established in 1984, it was actually the second
15 BID that was established.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm. And,
17 you know, we're talking about quite some time now.
18 Are you, when you refer to these events, are, is
19 this something new because of the Avenue NYC?

20 ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes. These
21 events never took place before. So, the tree
22 lighting ceremony was actually the first one that
23 we held, we had over 500 attendees, we have
24 beautiful church with an outdoor space and they
25 were happy to partner with us. And from a

1

2 community standpoint, it was in the news, I still
3 keep getting calls, and it's something that we're
4 going to continue to do year on, you know, going
5 forward.

6

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Wow. You know,
7 it goes to show you how I have to appreciate my
8 BIDs in my district, more so today than ever
9 before. You know, this to me is just one of the
10 items that is a guarantee when you run a bid, and
11 so I was astonished when I saws it, maybe I was
12 reading it wrong, but you're confirming that this
13 is the first ever. And so--

14

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

15

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --I can imagine
16 that you'll have less than 500 people observing
17 and enjoying a Christmas tree lighting, moving
18 forward prospectively in time that this will be
19 drawing thousands. And so, congratulations for
20 doing something that should've long ago--

21

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

22

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: --ben done.

23

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Well, I'm now in
24 competition with the Fordham, Fordham Road BID,
25 they had over 2,000. So, that's--

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CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [laughs]

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: [laughs] I'm in competition, I'm going to try and - -

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: [interposing]
The bar has been raised, of course.

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Of course.
Well, thank you very much for your honesty and your ability to just express how valuable this particular program has become for the neighborhood and the people of Washington Heights.

ANGELINA RAMIREZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you.

DANIEL MURPHY: Thank you. Madam Chair and Members of the Committee, wherever you are, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the retail corridor of Pitkin Avenue. Pitkin is a shopping district with a rich history, a history interwoven with that of the great borough of Brooklyn, as well as greater New York. I won't go into right now, not today. But I understand that this hearing is targeted on the three programs that are administered, or supported by the City and Small Business Services. I can

1
2 speak briefly, if not extensively, on those
3 programs, as our BID is currently within the midst
4 of participation in all three of them. We are now
5 working diligently through an Avenue NYC grant to
6 attract retail to our district, creating written
7 materials, such as a detailed database of
8 available properties, holding events to highlight
9 the value of available storefronts, such as Roll
10 Up the Gates events, and promulgating a concise
11 summary of market data, market data which was
12 culled through a previous Avenue NYC grant, to,
13 that's targeted towards retailers who will profit
14 by serving the consumer population that live
15 within and visit our street. This goes, scuze me,
16 hand-in-hand with the retail leasing program which
17 we will also take full advantage of as the program
18 in its next phase turns its focus on our shopping
19 community in Brownsville. And I look forward to
20 learning the new ways of instituting the best
21 practices of comparable economic development
22 organizations as I start the Neighborhood
23 Leadership Program later this month, through Coro.
24 And I can't stress enough really how important the
25 Department of Small Business Services has been

1
2 through all this process. I took over about a
3 year ago, on Pitkin Avenue. And they have been
4 stellar. Commissioner Walsh and his expert and
5 dedicated staff have provided invaluable technical
6 assistance and shown remarkable leadership in
7 helping a small economic development organization
8 such as ours to strengthen itself by recognizing
9 and utilizing the public and private resources
10 that are available for small businesses. In the
11 long term, this creates an economic benefit not
12 just for our district, but for the City as a whole
13 as a healthy and walkable retail district, it's
14 integral to a healthy and urban environment, as
15 well. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you, Mr.
17 Murphy. Mr. Murphy, did I hear you correctly, you
18 took over the Pitkin BID a year ago?

19 DANIEL MURPHY: I sure did.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Okay. So, in
21 the participation of these three particular BID,
22 programs, rather, you expect to achieve what?

23 DANIEL MURPHY: I expect to, well,
24 I expect to get some more retail on my district,
25 especially in a big project that we have which is

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2 a theater project, which was created with the help
3 of some federal, some federal programs, like the
4 new market tax credit and historic tax credit.
5 We're really focusing on that, which is adjacent
6 itself to a public plaza project, which is being
7 administered by the DOT. And we're sort of
8 integrating SBS's help into that, so we have a
9 gateway from the western portion of the district
10 that sort of brings people to our street.

11 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: So the theater
12 project and the public plaza project came first,
13 and you are bridging what would be three available
14 programs to helping you forge those two projects
15 forward?

16 DANIEL MURPHY: Yeah, vertical and
17 horizontal integration.

18 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Beautiful,
19 beautiful. And--

20 DANIEL MURPHY: Oh, I can say this,
21 look, no matter what, no matter what kind of help
22 we get from SBS, and we get great help from SBS--

23 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

24 DANIEL MURPHY: --DOT has been
25 there, we're getting MUNI meters, we're getting

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2 actually parking meters for the first time in 15
3 years, on Pitkin Avenue come this spring. And
4 we're getting MUNI meters, which we're really
5 happy about.

6 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Right.

7 DANIEL MURPHY: When it comes down
8 to it, we are, retail, is an economic indicator of
9 a larger economic story of the region.

10 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Absolutely.

11 DANIEL MURPHY: And, and we really
12 won't succeed until we have consumers who can
13 spend some money on our district.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Confidently.

15 DANIEL MURPHY: That's the number
16 one complaint from our retailers. Whatever we do,
17 however beautiful and clean and secure we make it,
18 you know, it's very important that we have people
19 who can spend some money in our district. I would
20 love it if those people came from immediately down
21 the street. That's not the case right now. We're
22 a very poor district. We do have, we do have
23 IBZ's throughout the City, one is adjacent to
24 ours. I think if you really want to focus on your
25 next Committee hearing, focus on vertically

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2 integrating with legislators at the State and
3 federal level, in trying to really incubate out
4 there, for the long term, and then you'll create
5 people, who'll create cohort that actually has
6 jobs, long term permanent jobs, that--and they'll
7 be able to really foster success in our district,
8 more than any city agency every could. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And are you,
10 are you saying that that's not happening now?

11 DANIEL MURPHY: No, it's not. We
12 have a pretty high unemployment rate out in
13 Brownsville.

14 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: No, but I'm
15 referring to the, to the IBZ that you're connected
16 to.

17 DANIEL MURPHY: To the, the East
18 Brooklyn Industrial Park?

19 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Mm-hmm.

20 DANIEL MURPHY: If there, if there
21 is a large employment sector going on over there,
22 I don't think I, I don't think our BID sees it. I
23 don't--

24 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Your BID does
25 not see it.

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2 DANIEL MURPHY: Does not see the
3 money from people making money, manufacturing,
4 over there, coming here.

5 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Have you
6 surveyed them?

7 DANIEL MURPHY: We have not, we do
8 not have the res--

9 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: I think that
10 would be a very smart tool to see what it is they
11 are in need of seeing, to attract them to come
12 over. Because there should be a symbiotic support
13 that where the workers walk over to the corridor
14 to spend their money, if there's the
15 establishments that they're looking to spend their
16 money on. And vice-versa, you know, perhaps
17 there's products being manufactured that the
18 retail corridor could make use of. You know, so
19 that, you know, there's--I just wanted to make
20 sure that I understood what were some of the goals
21 that you were hoping to achieve, in participation
22 of these three particular programs, because it's,
23 you're in a unique position where you're new, it's
24 three new programs you're going to be hoping to
25 take advantage of, to see if they're going to meet

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your goals.

DANIEL MURPHY: Right.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: And the merchants' goals more, more specifically.

DANIEL MURPHY: Absolutely, the merchants are, their goals are key. But as I said, merchants make money from shoppers. And shoppers have to make their money somewhere else. Hopefully it's somewhere close, and hopefully it's a good job. You know, the story of manufacturing within the City of New York, and certainly you know is Brooklyn, is one of a slippery slope downward.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Well, it's pro-
-it's the most steady right now.

DANIEL MURPHY: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Yes. I'm very familiar with the manufacturing industrial sector, which is something that I focus as a priority in this Committee.

DANIEL MURPHY: Okay, great.
Terrific.

CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Thank you. The last speaker, I believe, is with us, is Laurel

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Brown. Fantastic. Thank you.

LAUREL BROWN: Hi, good afternoon, thank you for having me, Chairperson Reyna. My name is Laurel Brown, I'm the Executive Director of the Jamaica Center Business Improvement District, located in downtown Jamaica, Queens. I'm also honored to say that I'm an alumnus of the inaugural class of the Coro Neighborhood Leadership Program. I also, like Daniel, and like Angelina, am a relatively new Executive Director, I've been on the job for 367 days. So, I started last year, January, so it's been a tremendous experience and I have to give cheers to the Department of Small Business Services, for being tremendously supportive, responsive and kind of echo the sentiments of all of my colleagues in that regard. On behalf of downtown Jamaica and my district, I want to again thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony on the ways that the Department of Small Business Services' innovative Neighborhood Leadership Program has helped to improve our collective neighborhoods across New York City. When you're called to improve an neighborhood as Business Improvement

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2 District leaders, such as myself are called to do,
3 almost definitionally you're tasked with changing
4 that neighborhood, changing it for the better, but
5 that's what we're called to do. The reality is
6 that for me, or any other district leader, to
7 effectuate change, especially in a neighborhood
8 like mine, Jamaica, it's truly a monumental task,
9 because there's so many competing priorities and
10 stakeholders that we have to account for. In
11 Jamaica we have over 600,000 residents, a major
12 transportation hub, over 300 retail businesses,
13 hundreds more office and service businesses, over
14 100,000 daily visitors, in a 15 block stretch, and
15 then we face stiff competition from the malls of
16 neighboring Long Island. And then there's the
17 rampant misperception about the neighborhood. All
18 of this must be contended with in order to do our
19 job of improving the area. Without neighborhood
20 leadership, the Neighborhood Leadership Program,
21 for a neighborhood leader such as myself who's
22 relatively young, relatively new, the sheer
23 gravity of the idea that I might have to wade
24 through all of this might have been intimidating.
25 And could have lured me to make small, safe and

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2 ultimately less impactful decisions, rather than
3 taking on the bold visionary change, making
4 decisions that might be more risky, but
5 groundbreaking for my neighborhood. At the
6 cornerstone of what I learned from Neighborhood
7 Leadership, is the idea that change, changing or
8 improving a neighborhood, is all about making
9 people feel uncomfortable. And that's okay. As a
10 leader in downtown Jamaica, one of the biggest
11 changes that I'm hoping to achieve for my
12 district, is to change people's misperceptions
13 about the area. As Neighborhood Leadership taught
14 me, I can't change something without disrupting
15 the status quo, and I can't disrupt the status quo
16 without making some stakeholders feel
17 uncomfortable. And I just have to accept that and
18 adapt accordingly. I've directly applied these
19 principals to how I manage my district. In this
20 past year, I've doubled the size of our staff,
21 pioneered various programs for my district,
22 including a new, brand new district marketing
23 campaign, a new visual merchandizing program, and
24 a marquee cultural tourism event, which is a big
25 fashion gala that we're launching through Avenue

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2 NYC funding. And so I've included some
3 information about those projects in the packet.
4 Moreover, practically speaking, to effectuate
5 meaningful change in a commercial district,
6 requires staff power that a small or mid-sized BID
7 like myself does not necessarily have the luxury
8 to afford. You know, when we come out to
9 meetings, sometimes our office is closed 'cause we
10 might have one or two staff members, particularly
11 as compared to some of our Manhattan counterparts
12 who have million plus dollar budgets, which could
13 theoretically put our neighborhoods, which tend to
14 be in the outer boroughs, the neighborhoods with
15 the smaller budgets, could theoretically put us at
16 a disadvantage, vis-à-vis the larger
17 organizations. But what Neighborhood Leadership
18 has done is kind of equalize the playing field for
19 the leaders of smaller organizations. So in the
20 absence of a large staff, what Neighborhood
21 Leadership has given me is a large network, a
22 network of leaders and experts in commercial
23 revitalization. As a Neighborhood Leader
24 participant, I had and continue to have direct and
25 intimate access to some of the leading change

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2 makers in commercial revitalization and economic
3 development. Such as when I and four of my
4 colleagues met with Dan Nissenbaum, the Chief
5 Operating Officer at Goldman Sachs's private
6 equity urban investment group, to ask for advice
7 about resources to obtain for financing businesses
8 in our district. This has been invaluable to my
9 organization. It has been an honor, as I said
10 previously, to be a member of the inaugural cohort
11 of the Neighborhood Leadership Program.

12 Commissioner Walsh and the staff at the Department
13 of Small Business Services have been exceedingly
14 supportive of our work to strengthen the
15 communities and businesses within our respective
16 district. Their Neighborhood Leadership Program
17 is a shining example of their innovation and a
18 testament to their commitment to us and the work
19 that we do in our neighborhoods. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON REYNA: Very
21 impressive. I appreciated your perspective of
22 making people uncomfortable. I wanted to just
23 express, you know, my appreciation for everyone
24 coming down here and giving their testimonies to
25 the level of greatness that they experienced,

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2 depending on what program or all programs they
3 participated in, and I hope that you continue to
4 apply for these programs, to continue to better
5 your positions and roles in improving the
6 dynamics, the economic dynamic of your commercial
7 corridors, whether that's a BID or a merchants
8 association, or a local organization, who is
9 interested in the overall neighborhood economic
10 vitality. I also wanted to share with everyone
11 who is in the room, whoever remains, the Council
12 was very intricate two years ago in providing what
13 was a roundtable for the need to identify the
14 credit crunch that businesses were experiencing in
15 the City of New York, and since then we were able
16 to create this resource guide. And so we want to
17 make sure that people leave, we have placed them
18 on the Sergeant-at-Arms' desk, where the
19 information leaflets are placed, and so we express
20 to everyone to please take one. We've tried to
21 have these translated, we continue to work on by
22 demand as to what translations are necessary. But
23 this gives the small business owner the
24 opportunity to explore micro-lenders and other
25 small business services that they in fact are not

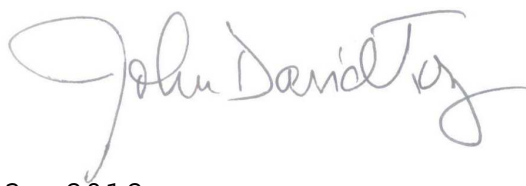
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2 aware of. And so, working with the Department of
3 Small Business Services, Economic Development
4 Corporation, and many of the micro-lenders, and
5 traditional lenders, we're improving the
6 conversations of access to credit. Thank you so
7 much and this meet--this hearing is adjourned.

8 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JOHN DAVID TONG 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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John David Tong". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed word "Signature".

Date February 13, 2012