

**Testimony of the New York City Economic Development Corporation
New York City Council Subcommittees on Zoning and Franchises
Kingsbridge Armory Restore New York Grant
December 12, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Riley, and members of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. My name is Michele Lamberti, and I serve as Vice President of Legislative Affairs in the Government and Community Relations department of the New York City Economic Development Corporation. I am joined by my colleague Jana Pohorelsky, Vice President in our Government and Community Relations department.

The New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) works to create a vibrant, inclusive, and globally competitive economy for all New Yorkers. Our work is guided by four strategic priorities: strengthening business confidence, growing innovation industries with a focus on equity, building neighborhoods as places to live, learn, work and play, and delivering sustainable infrastructure.

Pursuant to the New York State Urban Development Act, the City intends to file an application for the Empire State Development Corporation's Restore New York Communities Initiative ("Restore NY") grant. This grant provides municipalities with financial assistance for the revitalization of commercial and residential properties. The program encourages community development and neighborhood growth through the elimination and redevelopment of blighted structures.

The City intends to apply for Round 9 of the Restore NY municipal grant to support the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory. The grant funding would help address critical infrastructure needs at the Kingsbridge Armory and support the realization of goals included in the *Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan*.

The *Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan* was the result of an extensive engagement process with community residents, students, workers, and business owners about their vision for the Kingsbridge Armory. This plan captures all of the feedback gathered during the process from conversations with over 4,000 people, which included over 1,000 participants attending four public workshops, over 900 survey responses, over 500 community members touring the Armory, nine Community Board meetings, 16 small-group discussions, three public information sessions, and feedback from over 75 industry stakeholders. The *Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan* reflects the community's values, ideas, and perspectives, all of which we heard during the engagement process.

The City released the *Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan*, in August 2023, and together with the release of the subsequent Request for Proposals on September 22, 2023, sought proposals from qualified parties for the unique opportunity to redevelop and operate the

Kingsbridge Armory and accomplish the City's goals of creating a financially feasible, thriving, mixed-use development that would reflect the guiding principles set forth in the Vision Plan. We are excited about the robust engagement process done in partnership with the community which has generated many great proposals for this amazing asset; an asset that will need all the investment it can get. We look forward to the public announcement of a developer and working with Council to bring a project through the ULURP process.

The Kingsbridge Armory is a historic military facility located in the heart of the Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood of the Bronx and is one of the few remaining armories in New York City. The Kingsbridge Armory was constructed in 1917 and much of the building is in its original condition. The Armory lacks essential building systems including plumbing, HVAC, and life and fire safety, and does not have adequate electrical service and lighting. Based on previous studies, it is known that there are hazardous materials located throughout the Armory. The building envelope is not water-tight; the roof is past its useful life; and the windows are damaged and do not adhere to current NYC energy standards. Extensive work is needed just to bring this building into good standing, and we need every available dollar to do so. Restore NY funding, if granted, would be used to address these critical infrastructure needs of the Armory.

The City and State have committed \$216 million to benefit the redevelopment of the Armory by funding critical infrastructure needs that will leverage the maximum private investment while also supporting the community's goals identified through the on-going engagement process. Any public investments in the building will also help to support the realization of goals included in the *Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan*. As you know, redevelopment of the Armory is a massive undertaking with significant financial needs. We are leaving no stone unturned as we look to secure as many grants and funding opportunities as possible to advance this project.

Under the proposed application, the City will apply for \$2 million to facilitate the renovation and adaptive reuse of the Kingsbridge Armory, an existing landmarked building of approximately 588,000 gross square feet that is currently vacant. Redevelopment at the Kingsbridge Armory is a special opportunity to transform an awe-inspiring landmark into a place that is catalytic for economic development for the local community, the borough, the city, and the region.

Consistent with guidelines issued by the Empire State Development Corporation, the City respectfully requests that the Council make the following findings related to New York City's application for funding this project under the Restore NY grant:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the municipality's local revitalization or urban development plan;
2. The proposed financing is appropriate for the specific project;

3. The project facilitates effective and efficient use of existing and future public resources so as to promote both economic development and preservation of community resources; and
4. The project develops and enhances infrastructure and/or other facilities in a manner that will attract, create, and sustain employment opportunities where applicable.

Thank you, Chair Riley and members of the Subcommittee, for your time and consideration.

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