



Testimony of Seth Bornstein, Executive Director, Queens Economic Development Corporation, for the NYC Committee on Economic Development, Thursday, January 26, 2012

My name is Seth Bornstein and I am the Executive Director of the Queens Economic Development Corporation. The QEDC was founded in 1977. Our mission is to create and retain jobs. To this end we have a number of programs: **Neighborhood Development Business Services**; Entrepreneurial Space Business Incubator; and **Discover Queens** helps market the Borough to visitors and residents alike.

Our programs are funded through grants from the New York City Department of Small Business Services, New York City Economic Development Corporation, New York State Department of Economic Development, Small Business Administration and private contributions. Since its inception the QEDC has helped to promote the Borough of Queens as a destination for business, culture and visitors. Working with the Office of the Queens Borough President many years ago the QEDC initiated the Discover Queens Program. This has included year round events such as Shop Queens, Shop the World, Restaurant Week, Summer promotion programs that highlight many activities for residents and visitors alike, and a Winter shopping programs that promotes the importance of buying local. We also maintain the Discover Queens Visitor Center and are currently preparing a new and improved Visitor Guide with support from NYC + Co. We are also reactivating the Queens Tourism Council which will bring together all organizations that benefit from visitors and travelers. In the last few months we have been encouraged by the support from hotels, sports ventures and cultural institutions for the Queens Tourism Council.

Queens has over 2.3 million people (despite what the Census Bureau claims) and is a major city in its own right. As such it deserves - and needs - funding for programs that support tourism - a vital sector of the economy.

In the last few years, there has been a surge of interest in Queens, as evidenced by articles in major publications, new media coverage and TV shows based in the borough. This has spurred a reawakening of new and off beat tourist destinations. Neighborhoods such as Long Island City, Flushing, Jamaica and the Rockaways have seen major investment. Internationally known cultural attractions include PS 1, Museum of the Moving Image, and the Louis Armstrong House, that host thousands of visitors per year. Citi Field and the USTA are world class sports venues. Last year Resorts World New York, an entertainment and gaming complex, was welcomed into the borough with over 1,300 jobs and bringing in much needed tax revenue. And, there is a possibility of expansion with the Governor's proposed convention center

In 2010, more than 7 million visitors spent over \$3 billion in Queens. The travel sector supports 16 percent of the jobs in the borough. There are currently 79 hotels in Queens with more than 8,000 rooms. Plus, 11 more hotels are planned.

Queens is the gateway to New York City from the world and the continental United States. Over 65 million passengers pass through JFK and LaGuardia Airports each year. That is the population of several states. Clearly many are going on to other travel and business or pleasure trips in the metropolitan area. But even in transit they contribute to the local economy by expanding market exposure, commerce, job creation and most importantly, revenue in the form of salaries and taxes.

We currently receive a little under \$60,000 per year from NYC + Co. These funds have helped with our promotions, z-cards and the upcoming guide. We want to be the "go to" organization for tourism in Queens. Just last week their London office contacted us for information - and we responded in a matter of minutes. Queens is changing and we have met with NYC + Co and look forward to coming up with new and innovative programs to send out the message that we have lot going on in the Borough. But it will take increased resources to really make a difference.

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