



opportunities for a better tomorrow

Sunset Park

882 3rd Ave
Suite 10-10NE, Unit 18
Brooklyn, NY 11232
P: 718-369-0303
F: 718-369-1518

Bushwick

25 Thornton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206
P: 718-387-1600
F: 718-387-5005

Jamaica

168-25 Jamaica Avenue
Suite 202
Jamaica, NY 11432
P: 718-526-2984
F: 212-202-6456

Innovation Lab

87 35th Street
2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11232
P: 718-801-8970

info@obtjobs.org
www.obtjobs.org

**New York City Council Committee on Land Use
Tuesday September 15, 2020, 10:00am
Testimony of Liliana Polo-McKenna, Chief Executive Officer
Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow &
Member of The Sunset Park Community Coalition**

Good morning. My name is Liliana Polo-McKenna, Chief Executive Officer of Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow (OBT). OBT, founded in 1983 in Sunset Park, offers education and workforce programming for youth, ages 17-24, and adults who are disconnected from education and/or employment. OBT is also a member of the Sunset Park Community Coalition.

Thank you to the members of the Council for the opportunity to speak today.

Along with the Community Board, the Borough President, and Council Member Menchaca, our Coalition feels strongly that Industry City needs to follow through on public commitments to modify their application. Such modifications must include, among others, scaling down of the proposed retail square footage to align with Community Board 7's recommendations; and an enforceable 30% of space dedicated to manufacturing uses.

These, and other modifications work in tandem to support a platform of investments to address a variety of issues - long-standing needs that have only grown through the pandemic. As a workforce development leader, I am crystal clear on the need for jobs, a concern that I know we all share, as people navigate historic unemployment, and many face eviction and food insecurity. As the lead partner at the Innovation Lab, I have seen the possibilities and also the challenges in connecting local residents to opportunities at Industry City. Over the past two years, we have placed over 200 individuals at Industry City, and about 30% of those are residents of 11220 and 11232. Our work in collaboration with other workforce partners at the Innovation Lab, has allowed us to pilot local job fairs, engaging 1-on-1 with businesses, and the Industry City team has been critical in fostering those relationships. This is why I can say that the potential for scale is real. At the same time, Industry City is not an employer, and scale without binding commitments to local hiring, permanent training facilities, and creating a range of jobs is short-sighted. Capping retail and establishing a third-party enforcement mechanism are critical to that. Many of us, myself included, know that access to jobs on this very waterfront has been an important first step for Sunset Park families - and we need to ensure that is true well into the future.

As a Coalition, we believe that approval of Industry City's application as-is, without modifications, protections, and investments, represents a worst-case scenario. The zoning modifications outlined are the absolute minimum and serve as a foundation for investments. If equity is a central value in this process and in the City's economic recovery, the outlined zoning modifications *and* further community investments must be non-negotiables as the Council considers its vote.