



CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10

215 West 125th Street, 4th Floor New York, NY 10027
T: 212-749-3105 F: 212-662-4215
Website: <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb10/>

Hon. Marquis A. Harrison
Chairperson

FOSTERING EQUITY, EMPOWERMENT, AND ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT: A RESOLUTION ADDRESSING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOTHAM BUDS AND IMPROVED WEALTH AND OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT IN CENTRAL HARLEM

Whereas, Manhattan Community Board 10 (MCB10) is dedicated to advocating for the well-being, safety, and equitable treatment of its diverse community members; and

Whereas, the history of cannabis legalization in New York State is fraught with disparities, injustices, and racial discrimination that have disproportionately affected communities of color, including Harlem; and

Whereas, the criminalization of cannabis dates back to the early 20th century and was fueled by racially biased propaganda that unfairly targeted minority communities, resulting in discriminatory enforcement and convictions; and

Whereas, the so-called "War on Drugs" in the latter half of the 20th century intensified the criminalization of cannabis and disproportionately impacted low-income communities and people of color, leading to mass arrests and convictions; and

Whereas, the disparate impact of cannabis enforcement policies has led to a cycle of economic and social hardship for individuals with prior cannabis-related convictions, limiting opportunities for housing, employment, and education; and

Whereas, the Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA), signed into law in New York State, aims to rectify some of the historical injustices by expunging certain cannabis-related convictions and promoting social and economic equity in the cannabis industry; and

Whereas, the legalization of adult-use cannabis in New York State through the MRTA presents an opportunity to address past injustices, foster economic growth, and create pathways for restorative justice for affected communities; and

Whereas, Harlem, as a historically significant neighborhood with a rich cultural heritage, has been particularly impacted by the historical injustices surrounding cannabis enforcement and stands to benefit from equitable cannabis policies that promote community well-being and empowerment; and

Whereas, MCB10 passed a resolution in April 2022, urging the New York State legislature to ensure the implementation of the Marihuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) prioritizes justice, reinvestment, education, and social economic equity, particularly for Black cannabis startups, micro-businesses, and legacy market operators; and

Whereas, MCB10 also resolved that there should be inclusion of a Harlem community representative with expertise in addressing historical oppression and social injustice on the advisory board of the New York Office of Cannabis Management (OCM); and

Whereas, since 2022, MCB10 has hosted a series of educational discussions and forums with community-based organizations like the Harlem Business Alliance, educational institutions such as the CUNY School of Public Health’s Harlem Health Initiative to foster open dialogue within the Harlem community. Forums such as the “Higher Learning” series and the faith-based conversations served to educate the Harlem community about the benefits and the potential risk of cannabis, as well as its current and future economic opportunities; and

Whereas, MCB10 was informed in December 2022 of OCM's plans to open a cannabis dispensary on 125th Street without community input, leading to MCB10’s March 2023 letter demanding for the increased transparency and community involvement in the decision-making process by OCM and the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY); and

Whereas, a lawsuit filed by the 125th Street Business Improvement District (125th Street BID) against the proposed dispensary location on 125th Street, causing Judge Shahabuddeen Ally to release an opinion emphasizing the importance of community input and the role of MCB10 in providing an opinion regarding a dispensary in its community; and

Whereas, MCB10 requested an extension to ensure thorough community input and informed OCM that it would be more appropriate to consider the dispensary proposal at the September General Board Meeting to gather diverse community voices; and

Whereas, MCB10 held two public forums, January 26, 2023, and August 3, 2023, where DASNY and OCM provided insight to their decision-making process and members of the Harlem community had the opportunity to provide public comment on the proposed dispensary location; and

Whereas, MCB10 recognizes the complex perspectives surrounding the matter and the importance of economic opportunities, community representation, acknowledges the historical wrongs experienced by Harlemites, and recognizes their opportunity to contribute positively to the community by operating a legalized cannabis dispensary;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 remains steadfast in its commitment to foster balanced decision-making, considering diverse perspectives while prioritizing community welfare, equitable economic opportunities, transparency, and the historical context of Harlem's cannabis-related injustices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 lends its supports to the establishment of Gotham Buds Cannabis Dispensary located at 248 W 125th street.

under the following conditions:

1. Gotham Buds shall provide regular quarterly updates to the Economic Development Committee of Community Board 10 and attend other relevant committee meetings as needed, ensuring transparency in community engagement efforts and business operations.
2. Gotham Buds shall prioritize hiring from within the district, with particular emphasis on individuals who have been adversely affected by harmful cannabis-related laws, fostering local employment opportunities, and addressing historical injustices.
3. We strongly urge Gotham Buds to engage a minority-owned security firm, promoting diversity and inclusivity in their security measures.
4. The workforce of Gotham Buds shall reflect the diversity of the community, promoting inclusivity and empowerment.
5. Gotham Buds shall demonstrate social and cultural responsibility by investing in training programs aimed at creating career opportunities within Central Harlem.
6. Gotham Buds shall assure that the facilities are fully accessible to all, complying with ADA standards, ensuring equal access for every member of the community.
7. Gotham Buds shall create partnerships with other institutions that are stapled and important to the success of 125th street, including but not limited to the Apollo, the 125th street BID, the Studio Museum, fostering collaboration for the betterment of the Harlem community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 recognizes the paramount importance of communities and community boards in the process of identifying locations for cannabis dispensaries by OCM and DASNY. We call for a comprehensive re-evaluation of this process to ensure meaningful community involvement before locations are identified, fostering an environment that supports both community interests and responsible business growth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 is dedicated to ensuring that the process through which the state of New York has committed to reinvesting revenue generated from cannabis sales is streamlined to directly benefit local schools and institutions, thereby fostering community uplift; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 calls upon the Governor, the Mayor, and all other appropriate agencies to continue focusing on addressing the challenges that have been plaguing 125th street, ensuring the safety, cleanliness, and welcoming atmosphere of this vital business area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board 10 recognizes the significance of this moment, and this resolution shall stand as a testament to the unwavering commitment of Community Board 10 of Central Harlem to a just, equitable, and inclusive future, recognizing the historical injustices, advocating for responsible business practices, uplifting the entire community, and actively pursuing initiatives that foster improved wealth and economic well-being for all residents; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution be adopted on August 10, 2023, by Manhattan's Community Board 10 of Central Harlem and it will be shared with all relevant parties and institutions for proper implementation.