

CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

330 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 26<sup>th</sup> floor New York, NY 10036  
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512  
[www.nyc.gov/mcb4](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb4)

**LOWELL D. KERN**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

September 9, 2020

Hon. Andrew Cuomo  
Governor  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Hon. Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Hon. Corey Johnson  
Speaker, City Council  
224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206  
New York, NY 10001

**Re: Measures to Support Small Businesses**

Dear Governor Cuomo, Mayor De Blasio, and Speaker Johnson,

Small businesses line the avenues of Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen creating character and providing a distinctive identity to Manhattan Community Board 4's neighborhoods. They are now in crisis mode and fighting for their existence. The Partnership for New York City projects that a possible one-third of the 240,000 small businesses in the City may not reopen post-pandemic<sup>1</sup>. Mid-summer it was already estimated that more than 2,800 small businesses had permanently closed since March, of which almost one-third were restaurants. Half of these closures were in Manhattan. A survey done by the NYC Hospitality Alliance found that 83% of restaurants and bars did not pay full rent in July and many commercial landlords were averse to renegotiating leases<sup>2</sup>.

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) reinvigorated its Balanced Business Task Force in April of this year to examine the impact of the pandemic on small businesses in our district, to understand what owners are facing in reopening in the current economic situation, and to propose actions that might be taken by our electeds to support these small businesses as they struggle through these difficult times. To this end the Task Force

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://pfnyc.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://thenycalliance.org/information/july-2020-rent-report>

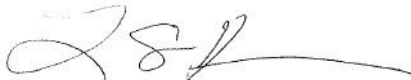
organized a Small Business Forum on July 28 to not only provide information on how to go about reopening but to hear from local people what their experiences have been to date and what they felt they would need to continue in operation<sup>3</sup>.

The Forum had a panel of six including three small business owners, a representative of the NYC Dept of Small Business Services, the chair of the Association of NYC BIDs, and the Small Business Marketing Manager for Google. Many of the asks, such as clearer and consistent communications from the city and state regulatory agencies, support of neighborhood and block associations, and technical assistance in developing new ways of marketing, can be achieved without legislation. MCB4 can help achieve some of these goals. But some can only be accomplished by action of our elected representatives. For this reason, MCB4, by a vote of 37 for, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present not eligible requests that our City Council, Mayor, Governor, and state legislature consider:

- rent and/or mortgage relief for small businesses
- real estate tax abatements for landlords of small businesses
- targeted and time limited sales tax reductions
- street/outdoor permits for retailers similar to outdoor dining
- creative uses of temporary regulatory exemptions incorporating the views of both community residents and local business owners
- time limited modifications to insurance, worker compensation, electric and water rates
- cost and risk reduction for maintenance of sidewalks, which were transferred to landlords and small businesses as recently as 2003

The New York City Council just last week voted up several bills to aid small businesses in this pandemic. Particularly critical and meeting a need expressed at our forum, the Council extended the commercial lease assistance program helping small business owners and landlords reach rental agreements. Much more remains to be done in the current economic climate to support our struggling small businesses, the heart of our communities.

Signed



Lowell Kern, Chair  
MCB 4



Burt Lazarin, Chair  
Balanced Business Task Force

cc:

Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress  
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senate  
Hon. Robert Jackson, NYS Senate  
Hon. Dick Gottfried, NYS Assembly  
Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal, NYS Assembly  
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3joSVnrwg4U&t=11s>