



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 4
BUSINESS DIVERSITY TASK FORCE REPORT

The second phase of the Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) Business Diversity Task Force explored ways to maintain the existing business mix of our neighborhoods which give them a unique definition and quality; and ways to support the growth of new businesses to add to the mix. Composed of both CB4 members and members of the public, the BDTF met periodically over the last ten months. It heard from people involved in providing support to local businesses and planning for their survival (i.e., Manhattan Borough President's office, the NYC Department of Small Business Services) and drew on information in reports and newsclips about how other cities such as San Francisco, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, London, and Paris have attempted to address similar issues.

At its January 6, 2016 Full Board meeting CB4 approved the goals and recommendations made by the Business Diversity Task Force. They are grouped first by measures the Board itself could implement. These are followed in another two groupings by possible legal and administrative tools the Board would favor but whose creation would need to be accomplished by other governmental entities pursuant to legislation and/or changes in regulations. With some changes suggested by Board members, the full Board voted to approve these goals and implementation tools.

01/06/16

BUSINESS DIVERSITY TASK FORCE:
GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The following recommendations are made within the context of this strategic priority of Manhattan Community Board 4: to support and maintain a diverse mix of small affordable businesses.

Actions MCB4 could take on its own

1. Create a list of culturally distinct retail businesses in our communities that together provide a sense of place and would be identified as "assets of community value". This could be done, for example, by encouraging residents and neighborhood associations of the district to nominate businesses for the list.
2. To choose these businesses, MCB4 would establish a public/Board group using standards developed in conjunction with professional assistance. Criteria to be considered in a designation process might include:
 - longevity (how many years the business has been operating in the neighborhood not necessarily in one spot)
 - ownership by a veteran
 - ownership by people who have ties/do outreach to or live in the community

- a commitment to stay in the community
- a workforce with community residents
- located at a site with a distinctive façade (storefront) and/or in a landmarked building creating a sense of place
- the provision of a product or service unavailable elsewhere in the community

This cultural “landmarking” of legacy businesses could generate dramatic publicity and spotlight not only the businesses themselves but the owners of the buildings in which they are located. Awards could be handed out and notices could appear at these stores.

3. Adopt a policy with guidelines for use by MCB4’s two land use committees that would state the Board’s strategic intention to support small businesses and urge applicants to include provisions for them in any of their plans coming before the Board as well as encourage the use of long term retail leases.
4. Compile and maintain a retail/commercial data base/inventory for the district.
5. Connect large corporations willing to assist small business with those businesses in our district.

Land Use

1. Designate small business retail corridors within MCB4’s neighborhoods. For example, parts or all of Tenth, Ninth and Eighth Avenues could be so recognized in the zoning ordinance. Within these corridors of the district, formula sensitive chain zoning (based on the existing chain presence within a defined area) would be adopted to deter large retail spaces and encourage a local presence.
2. Study the possibility of encouraging the development of small side street retail (not including restaurants and bars) within 100’ of avenue corners.

Real estate taxes and tenant/landlord relations and small business support

1. Provide real estate tax incentives for landlords renting to local small businesses and those designated of public interest or “assets of community value” or “cultural landmarks.”
2. Privilege needed community services possibly through real estate tax abatements that could be passed through in less than “market” rate rent. Give abatements also to landlords where it is found they rely heavily on commercial space to pay their way because of legally imposed residential rent limitations on the other units of their property.
3. Impose real estate tax disincentives for vacant (more than six months, for example) street level retail property.
4. Develop a governmental framework within which the retail lease negotiation process could unfold including disclosure of landlord intentions to the tenant and notification a certain time

before lease expiration. It might also include mandated mediation and one year lease extensions if the parties were not able to come to agreement initially (described in the BP report).

5. Support small business with legal assistance, information, help with training of employees/on the job training, access to loans and grants and alternate financing (currently provided in some ways by the NYC SBS). Help programs to evolve retail condominiums. The existence of this support structure would be publicized and its offerings widely communicated.