



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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DELORES RUBIN

Chair

Jesse Bodine

District Manager

August 15, 2017

Hon. Brad Hoylamm
New York State Senate
494 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 1700

re: High Commercial Rent Blight

Dear Senator Hoylman,

In regards to your recent Talking Point article in *Chelsea Now*, July 6, 2017, Community Board 4 (CB4) would like to express its gratitude for your continuing efforts to highlight this very important issue affecting the quality of life for our residents.

Over the course of ten months in 2015/16, the CB4 Balanced Business Working Group (“BDTF”) met to discuss the issue of the plight of our small businesses and to explore ways to maintain the existing business mix and support the growth of new businesses in our neighborhoods. The BDTF was composed of both CB4 members and public members. We heard from agencies involved in supporting local businesses and planning for their survival, i.e., Manhattan Borough President’s Office, the NYC Department of Small Business Services. We also studied reports and news clips how other cities such as San Francisco, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, London and Paris have attempted to address similar issues. Many of the ideas and conclusions reached by the BDTF mirror your ideas in the article.

Community Board 4 Initiatives include:

1. Small Business Legacy Landmarking: Create a list of culturally distinct retail businesses identified as “assets of community value.”
 - establish a threshold for number of years operating in the community.
 - if business owners have personal ties or live in the community;
 - if the business agrees to continue its current business plan;
 - facade (storefront) originality.
 - history of outreach and its support of the community.
 - situated in a landmark building.
2. Connect large corporations willing to assist small businesses.
3. Adopt guidelines for use by CB4’s two land use committees that state the Board’s support for small businesses and urge applicants to include provisions in their plans for small businesses and encourage granting long term-leases as well.
4. Designate small business retail corridors within MCB4’s neighborhoods. Parts of Tenth, Ninth and Eighth Avenues could be recognized in the Zoning ordinance to encourage a local presence and deter large retail

spaces.

Real Estate Taxes and Tenant/Landlord Initiatives:

1. Provide tax incentives for landlords renting to local small businesses and those businesses designated as “Legacy” or “Assets of the Community.”
2. Impose real estate tax disincentives for retail store fronts kept vacant over a certain period of time.
3. Develop a framework for the renegotiation of leases which would include: timely notification prior to lease expiration, mandated mediation and one year lease extension if no agreement is reached.
4. Support small businesses with legal assistance, employee and management training, access to loans grants.

Recommendations of the Borough President’s “Small Business Big Impact”:

1. Support for small businesses to remain in their current sites, 180 day notice of intent, mandated mediation in rent negotiations and 15% rent increase for a one-year extension if no agreement is reached to give the business time to relocate.
2. Change zoning to expand commercial overlay districts and create low intensity commercial use for side streets and small spaces.
3. Use BIDS more effectively to enhance the small business retail environment with real estate assistance, microloans and the creation of an urban neighborhood fund.

In addition, the CB4 office has an on-going partnership with NYC Business Solutions, and hosts monthly one-on-one small business consultations as well as trainings on commercial lease negotiations. In conclusion, Community Board 4 looks forward to working and participating with you and you staff to develop solutions to this growing blight and economic hardship affecting our community and many other areas in New York City.



Delores Rubin
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4

[Signed on 8/15/2017]

Burt Lazerin
First Vice Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4
Chair, CB4 Balanced Business Working Group

cc: Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Marisol Alcantara, New York State Senate
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council

