

January 4, 2016

Dear Chairman Weisbrod and City Planning Commissioners:

On behalf of the hundreds of small, local businesses we serve and represent, we urge you to approve Mayor de Blasio's affordable housing reforms. We represent immigrant businesses, mom-and-pop shops, and neighborhood retailers that represent the cornerstones of their communities. We need reforms that make affordable housing a mandatory requirement in new development and that support better neighborhood retail to build stronger communities.

Affordable housing is the life-blood of our neighborhoods. We need it for our employees. We need it for our customers. The housing crisis has meant New Yorkers are spending more and more of their income on rent. Today, more than half of New Yorkers are rent-burdened, spending more than a third of their take-home pay on rent. Those are costs that come home to our members. Every dollar spent on rent is one less dollar spent at a mom-and-pop shop or at a local restaurant. The ever-rising cost of housing is bad for business, and it's putting more and more pressure on our own hardworking employees.

What the de Blasio administration has proposed will change the reality in our neighborhoods for the better. The mayor's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing program will make it a hard and fast requirement for developers themselves to build permanently affordable housing in any rezoned area of the city. This program, together with new construction that is subsidized by the City, will exponentially increase the amount of affordable housing we can provide to our city's working families.

We are also strong supporters of the Zoning for Quality and Affordability. A key element of this reform package will have a profoundly positive impact on local businesses. Everyone knows that rents for retail space in the city have continued to skyrocket. One way we could help keep prices under control is to increase the supply of retail spaces for rent. But the current decades-old zoning rules don't produce the kind of ground-floor retail spaces our businesses need. Those storefronts often go vacant for want of tenants—in many cases, builders don't even attempt to include ground-floor retail in new developments knowing how hard it will be to attract stores, medical offices and restaurants. By overhauling these outdated rules, as the City proposes, we could generate more of the high-quality retail space our members need.

Together, these reforms will strengthen our neighborhoods, serve our workers and customers, and ensure New York City remains a city for everyone. We urge you to support them.

Sincerely,

The Bodega Association
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
Brooklyn Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Chinese Chamber of Commerce of New York, Inc.
Haitian American Business Network
National Supermarket Association
NYC Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
New York Women's Chamber of Commerce
New York State Federation of Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
New York Association of Hispanics in Real Estate and Construction
Manhattan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the New York City Council