

SBS Statement on Proposed East Harlem 125th Street BID
Before City Council Finance Committee
April 24, 2025

Good morning, Chair Brannan and members of the Finance Committee. I am Calvin T. Brown, Deputy Commissioner of Neighborhood Development at the Department of Small Business Services (SBS). I am joined by Emily Edwards, Executive Director of the BID Program & Organizational Development, and Leslie Velazquez, Director of BID Development and Legislation. We are here to testify in support of the proposed East Harlem 125th Street Business Improvement District (or BID).

At SBS, we are committed to unlocking economic potential and creating economic security for New Yorkers through business services, workforce opportunities, and neighborhood development. We partner with community-based organizations, such as Business Improvement Districts, to build thriving neighborhoods across the five boroughs. During the Adams administration, we have awarded over \$1.8 million in grant funds to incentivize the creation of new BIDs and nearly \$11 million to support small BIDs. For more than 40 years, BIDs have been valuable and proven partners in commercial revitalization and economic development across the city.

SBS supervises all active BID formation and expansion efforts, serving as an advisor and resource for communities interested in developing or expanding BIDs. We are careful to ensure that each steering committee we work with

- adheres to our planning process and policies;
- solicits robust community input; and
- performs extensive outreach to collect and demonstrate broad-based support across all stakeholder groups.

Moreover, we are cognizant of the unique nature of each community we assist and aim to empower local stakeholders to make determinations on proposed services, boundaries, and budget size that best suit their community's needs, appetite, and ability to pay assessments. While we always impart strong planning principles and share data and best practices when working with any BID formation effort, we recognize that the power and effectiveness of BIDs rests in their unmatched understanding of local needs and issues.

SBS has invested in the East Harlem neighborhood since the 2017 rezoning. For nearly a decade now, we have funded local CBDOs, including the New Harlem

East Merchants Association, now known as Uptown Grand Central. We are cognizant of the changes and challenges in this neighborhood, which is why we are especially excited for this work to come to fruition as a new BID.

Like other recent BID formations that SBS has overseen, the East Harlem 125th Street formation effort involved numerous meetings and consultations with local stakeholders throughout the planning and outreach phases. After an extensive outreach effort and close coordination with all key parties, SBS determined that the documented support among all stakeholder groups – 74% of the area’s total assessed value, 50% of total properties, and 34% of commercial tenants– was sufficient to start the legislative process. The levels of outreach achieved by the East Harlem 125th Street BID effort meets the broad base support SBS requires before any effort advances to the legislative phase.

As required by law, the East Harlem 125th Street Steering Committee mailed the summary of the City Council Resolution, no less than 10 days and no more than 30 days before today’s hearing, to the following parties:

- each owner of real property within the proposed district at the address shown on the latest City assessment roll,
- such other persons as are registered with the City to receive tax bills concerning real property within the district, and
- tenants of each building within the proposed district.

The steering committee also published notice of this hearing in “a newspaper in general circulation in the city,” per the legal requirement.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Deputy Speaker Ayala, as well as Council Member Salaam for their ongoing support of the East Harlem 125th Street BID formation effort. SBS believes this BID will provide the much-needed services and support to the businesses within the proposed boundaries.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that representatives of the BID formation effort are present here today to testify and address any specific questions that I am unable to answer.

At this time, I am happy to take any questions. Thank you.