CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

---------- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING
AND FRANCHISES
---------- X

March 4, 2026
Start: 11:05 a.m.
Recess: 11:51 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing Room 3

B E F O R E: Farah N. Louis, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
David M. Carr
Elsie Encarnación
Amanda C. Farias
Simcha Felder
Yusef Salaam
Justin E. Sanchez
Lynn C. Schulman
Shanel Thomas-Henry

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Antonios Michelakis
New York City Parks

Travis Terry
Le Grande Boucherie

Ernesto Vigoreaux
APEX Building Group

Alexander Han
New York City Parks

Lindsay Schott
New York City Parks

Gabriella Cappo
New York City Parks

Jay Valeora
Studio B Architecture

Howard Goldman
Zoning Counsel to Applicant

Neil Weisbard
Le Grande Boucherie

SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises recorded on March 4th, 2026, in Hearing Room 3 by Nazly Paytuvi(SP?).

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning everyone. Good morning and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. If you would like to testify, you must fill out an appearance card with one of the Sergeant at Arms in the back of the room, even if you signed up already online.

At this time, please silence all electronic devices. Please silence all electronic devices and no one may approach the dais at any time during this hearing.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: [GAVEL] Good morning and welcome to the meeting of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. I am Council Member Farah Louis, Chair of the Subcommittee this morning. I am joined by Council Members Carr, uh, Thomas-Henry, San—Justin Sanchez, uh, Elsie Encarnación, Amanda Farias, Lynn Schulman. Let me not forget anyone else. All right, that’s everybody.

Today we are holding three public hearings on the following proposals: 20 Berry Street Industrial Rezoning in Council Member Restler's district, Allen Street Demapping in Council Member Marte's district, and 1325 Avenue of the Americas Text Amendment in Council Member Maloney's district. We are also scheduled to hear a residential rezoning known as the Hamilton Avenue but this proposal is laid over and will be heard at a future date.

This meeting is being held in hybrid format. Members of the public who wish to testify may testify in person or via Zoom. Members of the public wishing to testify remotely may register by visiting the New York City Council website at www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up, or for those of you here in person, please see one of the sergeants at arms to prepare and submit a speaker card.

Members of the public may also view a livestream broadcast of the meeting at the Council's website. Where you— when you are called to testify before the Subcommittee, if you are joining us remotely, you will remain muted until recognized by myself to speak. When you are recognized, your microphone will

be unmuted. We will limit public testimony to two minutes per witness. If you have additional testimony that you would like the Subcommittee to consider, or if you have written testimony that you would like to submit instead of appearing in person, please email it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Written testimony may be submitted up to three days after the hearing is closed.

Please indicate the LU number and/or project name in the subject line of your email. We request that witnesses joining us remotely remain in the meeting until excused by the Chair, as Council Members may have questions.

Lastly, for everyone attending today's meeting, this is a government proceeding and decorum must be observed at all times. Members of the public are asked to not speak during the meeting unless you are testifying. The witness table is reserved for people who are called to testify, and no video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such recordings at this— to the Sergeant-at-Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

I will now open the public hearing on LU number 41 regarding 1325 Avenue U of the— Avenue of the Americas Text Amendment Proposal in Midtown Manhattan in Council Member Maloney's district.

The proposal is from an existing restaurant located next to the— next to a covered public passageway known as the Galleria, and the restaurant is seeking to legalize its outdoor cafe seating in the Galleria. The Galleria in question is the covered public passageway known as 6 1⁄2 Avenue's mid-block between 6th and 7th Avenues.

Currently, outdoor cafe seating is not allowed in such passageways. For anyone wishing to testify regarding this proposal remotely, if you have not already done so, you must register online by visiting the Council's website at council.nyc.gov/landuse. For anyone with us in person, please see one of our Sergeant-at-Arms to submit a speaker card.

If you prefer to submit written testimony, you can always do so by emailing it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

We've been joined by Council Members Salaam and Felder. I now call the applicant panel for this

proposal, which consists of Neil Weisbard and Travis Terry.

Counsel, please administer the affirmation.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Can you please raise your right hand and state your name for the record?

NEIL WEISBARD: Neil Weisbard.

TRAVIS TERRY: Travis Terry.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony this morning and in response to Council Member questions?

PANEL: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: You may begin.

NEIL WEISBARD: We also had a PowerPoint. Oh, okay, great.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Swipe in.

NEIL WEISBARD: Okay, great. Good morning, Chair Louis, Council Members. My name is Neil Weisbard of the Law Firm Seyfarth Shaw, and I appear before you on behalf of Le Grande Boucherie, who operates a restaurant within 1325 Avenue of the Americas, 3 Block Galleria.

Next slide, please. The site is located between West 53rd and West 54th Street. Approximately mid-block in a— there's a through-block galleria, and the galleria was part of a floor area increase for— to construct the 35-story office building on the site. And in 1990, this all occurred. The galleria, which is a privately owned public space, is approximately 6,800 square feet. However, in 1996, City Planning Commission amended the text of the zoning resolution and does not grant any bonuses for through-block gallerias, and any of the regulations that regulated through-block gallerias were amended and, and removed. And under the current Zoning Resolution, open-air cafés or tables and chairs for accessory restaurants within privately owned public spaces are only permitted in areas that are open to the sky.

And a through-block galleria has a covered roof, and therefore a Text Amendment is required to allow these within the privately owned public spaces. There are only two other sites that are subject to this Text Amendment. They're both within 6th and a half Avenue. One is at 135 West 20— West 52nd Street, and one is at 1285 Avenue of the Americas.

And it's important to note that if a restaurant within those other public through-block gallerias, they would need to seek City Planning certification, as is the case with our application as well. We are concurrently seeking the certification from City Planning.

Uh, next slide, please. And next slide, please. So the proposed action will permit an open-air cafe totaling about 1,080 square feet. It will contain 57 tables and 114 chairs, most of them adjacent to Le Grande Boucherie, which is located on the north side of the plan. And then a— there'll be five tables in front of the Kaiseki Room restaurant, which is located on the south of the through-block galleria.

Next slide, please. Although this is not subject to your approval, the application also seeks a modification to the original certification from 1990 and also will institute numerous improvements to the through-block galleria, including movable planters, benches, trash receptacles, heat lamps, lighting features, and new decorative pavement.

Next slide, please. So this picture really tells the story of how this through-block galleria has changed. On the left is before Le Grande Boucherie

began operating within the through-block galleria, when they took hold of the space as tenant, they did all these major improvements, including the beautiful wood paneling and the chandeliers and the - the decorative pavement.

So they made a real improvement to this site. The 3-block gallery, uh, before Le Grande Boucherie moved in was really unused and neglected, and now it's an active, lively, and vastly improved space. Next slide, please.

This is the Text Amendment that we are requesting, and the areas of Text Amendment are underlined, and basically it just states that open-air cafés now can seek a certification from City Planning and that certain obstructions are permitted, including movable planters and the fact that an open-air, uh, a café does not need to be open to the sky.

The City Planning unanimously approved the application. Community Board 5 was in favor of the application, provided there was signage that indicated that the restrooms could be used by the, by the public. And I'm gonna ask Travis to explain that this has been discussed, and we discussed this. City

Planning was not in favor of this request and approved the application unanimously, and I'll hand it over to Travis to address the Community Board 5's concerns.

TRAVIS TERRY: Thank you, Neil, and, uh, thank you, Chair Louis, and Honorable Members of the City Council. I'm Travis Terry, I serve as a Public Affairs Advisor to the applicant. Um, just a quick thing on the restrooms, which was brought up by Manhattan Community Board 5. I just want to say that we do appreciate and acknowledge Manhattan Community Board 5's request to post signage regarding public restroom access at the restaurant. We did give this request some thought, some thoughtful internal consideration. However, after careful discussion, um, though we are always willing to allow non-patrons access to the bathrooms upon request, it's our practice today, um, we did not feel comfortable move-uh, adding the signage at this point.

Our team, when we talked to staff, staff expressed some significant concerns relative to safety and operational impact. Specifically, public restroom signage could encourage individuals who are not patrons to enter the restaurant. Our bathrooms

are internal into the restaurant. They're not external. Um, but we, but we did not want, uh, patrons enter the restaurant solely to use the facilities, which, as, as I noted, our staff felt could have some safety concerns, um, and for the patrons of the restaurant.

Uh, additionally, so broadly promoting the restroom availability could attract some increased foot traffic that we're not— the restaurant just simply is not equipped to manage. Um, as you know, operating, uh, a restaurant in today's environment is quite challenging and managing the access beyond our, uh, current practice of permitting upon request bathroom access could create some additional, uh, staffing, monitoring, and maintenance burdens that could be costly and difficult to sustain.

Um, with that-

NEIL WEISBARD: Just one thing I wanted to note as well, this does, as I mentioned, requires a certification from City Planning, and that certification is required every three years. And we're here to answer any questions.

TRAVIS TERRY: Yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: That's the end of your presentation?

NEIL WEISBARD: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: All right,thank you.

So I have a couple of questions, and then I'll open it up to my colleagues. Uh, you mentioned one other Galleria in the area, but I wanted to know how many Gallerias exist in Manhattan or elsewhere that now qualify to have outdoor café seating in the Galleria?

NEIL WEISBARD: So right now, none qualify.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay.

NEIL WEISBARD: As far as we know, there's only two other locations through this 6½ Avenue.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: All right, beyond signage, what design measures are you proposing to make sure the public is aware that the galleria remains open and accessible to the public?

NEIL WEISBARD: So there is signage at, at each entrance indicating that this is a publicly accessible, privately owned space. Your typical POP signage is at both entrances on West 53rd and West 54th Street.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: But what design measures? What are the designs? Like, what are the design measures?

NEIL WEISBARD: That we're seeking? The improvements that we're seeking or the signage? This— the signage is—

TRAVIS TERRY: We're not anticipating any other—

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: To improve the public's access to the space regarding the design. So there's the signage part, which you've answered that question but we're talking about the design part for public accessibility.

TRAVIS TERRY: This slide might help because it shows, it shows this is a publicly accessible galleria. That's not going to change, that's going to be permanent. It's just the restaurant only can— is only a portion of it.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Got it.

NEIL WEISBARD: And during the City Planning Certification process to approve open-air cafés in privately owned public spaces, there's certain minimum width requirements so the public has access from each end, and we comply with all of those.

TRAVIS TERRY: And we've— the restaurant has also invested in the space with the building owner to make sure that it's more beautiful and more accessible.

NEIL WEISBARD: This space has completely transformed. If I can bring up that other photo.

TRAVIS TERRY: Yeah, we can show up that slide in the before and after.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Okay.

NEIL WEISBARD: Thank you. Do any of my colleagues have questions? Council Member Encarnación.

COUNCIL MEMBER ENCARNACIÓN: Hi, I know you— hello, I know you mentioned that the Community Board was opposed because of the, uh, restrooms. It seems like the Borough President as well.

TRAVIS TERRY: The Borough President, uh, approved, uh, with a, with a condition that we look at the potential signage for the public restrooms.

COUNCIL MEMBER ENCARNACIÓN: And so that would still be a no for, for, for that, even though this is a public space? The seating would only be for people that are using the restaurant, right?

NEIL WEISBARD: The, the restrooms are currently available upon request by people who aren't eating at the restaurant.

COUNCIL MEMBER ENCARNACIÓN: Right but the seating there would be people— for people only within that area.

NEIL WEISBARD: Within that area but there is other seating for the public outside of the restaurant.

COUNCIL MEMBER ENCARNACIÓN: Got it. Okay, thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER ENCARNACIÓN: Hmm, hmm.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Counsel, are there any other members of the public who wish to testify remotely or in person regarding this proposal?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Um, no, we have no one signed up either remotely or in person to testify.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: For members of the public here to testify, please note that witnesses will, will generally be called in panels of three. If you are a member of the public signed to testify, please stand by when you hear your name being called and prepare to speak when I indicate that you may begin. This panel is now excused.

NEIL WEISBARD: Thank you. Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Please also note that once all panelists in your group have completed their testimony, if remotely, you will be removed from the meeting as a group, and the next group of speakers will be introduced.

Once removed, participants may continue to view the livestream broadcast of this hearing on the Council website. Members of the public will be, will be given two minutes to speak. Please do not begin until the Sergeant at Arms has started the clock. The following individuals who signed up to testify should now come to the witness table, and none are here right now.

So, we will skip to the next proposal. All right, if there are any members of the public who wish to testify regarding this proposal remotely, please press the raise hand button now.

If you are in person, please identify yourself to one of the Sergeants. There being— there are no other members of the public who wish to testify, uh, regarding LU-41 relating to the 1325 Avenue of the Americas Text Amendment, the public hearing is now closed and these items are now laid over.

Please stand at ease. [17:12-17:18].

I will now open the public hearing on LU's numbers 42 and 43 regarding the Allen Street demapping in the Lower East Side in Council Member Marte's district. The Department of Parks and Recreation is seeking to demap a portion of the median along Allen Street and map parkland to facilitate the activation of the median.

Parks is also seeking a Text Amendment to maintain Allen Street as a wide street. For anyone wishing to testify regarding this proposal remotely, if you have not already done so, you must register online by visiting the Council's website at council.nyc.gov/landuse.

For anyone with us in person, please see one of the Sergeant-at-Arms to submit a speaker card. If you would prefer to submit written testimony, you can always do so by emailing it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

I now call the applicant panel for this proposal, which consists of Antonios Michelakis, Michelakis. All right, Alexander Han, uh, Lindsay Schott, and Gabriella Cappo.

Counsel, please administer the affirmation.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Could you please raise your right hand? Okay and state your name for the record, starting from right to left?

Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony this morning and in response to Council Member questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. You may begin your testimony, which is limited to eight minutes and I will just ask you to please restate your name and organization for the record, and you may begin.

ANTONIOS MICHELAKIS: Uh, thank you. I'm Antonios Michelakis. I am the Director of Parklands for New York City Parks. Uh, before you today are two ULURP Applications that we have submitted. The first one, 250306 MMM, is for the demapping of a portion of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington in Community District 3. We're demapping it as right-of-way and mapping it as parkland.

Uh, next slide, please. Uh, this is an image of the mall itself. It is, uh, an existing mall. It's 9,300 square feet. It was built by the Borough President of Manhattan back in the mid-1920s. At, at the far left of it along Delancey Street is a restroom, also built by the Borough President of

Manhattan. Both the restroom and the mall were transferred to the Parks Department for maintenance obligations, uh, by 1938. Uh, the Parks Department has maintained the property since then, but the mall was shut— I'm sorry, the restroom was shuttered in the mid-1950s and hasn't been open since.

Next slide, please. A few years ago, the Parks Department started— began engaging the community district, uh, Community Board for opportunities to re— to reimagine this space and how it can be used in the community. Through those discussions, we began discussing it with the DOT as well, and it was determined by both agencies that the, uh, best resolution to, uh, operating a concession at this site in the future would be to demap this as right-of-way and map it as parkland so that the Parks Department is the only agency with oversight over any future concession at the site.

Uh, next slide, please. The second application Uh, is, uh, paramount because it affects the, uh, other, uh, buildings on, uh, Allen Street and it is a Zoning Text Amendment that would change, uh, the definition of a wide street on Allen Street,

specifically between Delancey and Rivington, to a wide street.

Uh, next slide, please. Uh, the existing right-of-way is mapped at 138 feet, which means that any buildings being proposed on Allen Street between Rivington and Delancey need only a setback of 10 feet. But after our mapping, if it is approved, uh, Allen Street will be divided into 2 narrow streets of 57 feet each with a park mapped in the center of it. That would force the definition of Allen Street to be a narrow street.

So the Zoning Text Amendment is to avoid that and allow the buildings to, uh, retain their existing, uh, zoning regulations. And so the definition will change for only the buildings, uh, that faced Allen Street between Delancey and Ribbington. They will now be facing a wide street, even though on paper it's only a 57-foot mapped street width.

Uh, and that concludes the presentation.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. Uh, we've also been joined by Council Members Marte and Restler. Um, I have a couple of questions— hold on, I have a couple of questions, then I'll hand it over to Council Member Marte.

Uh, this restroom has been closed since the 1950's. Could you please provide context about what prompted the city to pursue this restroom rehabilitation?

ANTONIOS MICHELAKIS: Uh, well uh, it's not necessarily just the restroom, like, it's a restroom petition, but it's for a concession and in the concession— I'm sorry, I wanted to add that we will be including a public restroom as part of any request for proposals that will go out to the public. Um, so that is a part.

So, uh, hmm, mhm, it sort of was prompted by the Community Board and the district wanting to reactivate the site. It's been closed for so many years. Um, and so and in order to engage the public and to bring more people to this mall and, and to the site, uh, that's why we, we began it.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Has Parks considered mapping the entire Allen Street malls as unified parkland to avoid jurisdiction issues across multiple city agencies?

ANTONIOS MICHELAKIS: So, uh, the remaining malls on Allen Street, um, are also in the street right-of-way, but they are also maintained by the

Parks Department. This isn't unique. We have hundreds of these kinds of sites all throughout the city and we have agreements with City DOT, some that date back from the '20s and '30s when they were provided maintenance obligations to the Parks Department. Um, more recently, we have a Green Streets Agreement, which means— which gives the Parks Department the ability to develop street right-of-way as, uh, green spaces.

Um, and so this arrangement has worked fine between our agencies. Uh, the only reason we're doing it for this particular site is because of the restroom and not wanting, um, to sort of mix agencies and regulations for any potential concessionaire.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. I'll now call on Council Member Marte.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Uh, thank you so much for being here, and I know the community has called for this for a long time, so we actually are extremely excited that you're moving forward with this plan. Uh, you know, the current concession building has been a really sore sight, uh, for many people in the community. There's been active graffiti and people just living around it and using it in ways that

shouldn't be used. So I think there's a lot of, you know, positive attention around this in the community.

I would like to know kind of like the work you have done for outreach. Uh, you know, my office has been receiving a lot of calls and cold calls for the past you know, 4 years about potential use of this space. What have you done to proactively, outside of the Community Board, go to the community to let them know that this is happening and that there might be a potential RFP for the new concession stand?

ANTONIOS MICHELAKIS: Sure, I'll let my colleagues answer that about our outreach.

ALEXANDER HAN: Thank you. Um, my name is Alexander Han. I'm Chief of Concessions here at Parks. Um, we've done extensive outreach to the electeds in the community, uh, and we've also met with the community board several times throughout the years. Expressing our interest in having a concession here and, and we actually issued an RFP, uh, prior to the pandemic seeking an operator. Unfortunately, we were not able to attract enough interest given, um, the site being owned by DOT and our hope is that by, by proceeding with the ULURP

process, that, um, Parks can, can then finally issue an RFP seeking an operator here.

Um, if there's any, you know, we do, we do outreach, um, when an RFP is issued to local businesses to make them aware, and of course, we would follow up with the Community Board again and, um, as of today, we have a, a, a meeting scheduled with the Parks Committee of CB3 next week.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Great. Um, are there any, like, prelim— preliminary, like, visions that, uh, either DOT or Parks have on, on the use of the space, or is it a wide-open RFP?

ALEXANDER HAN: The RFP is primarily for food service. Um, all uses in, in, on parks property need to be parks-appropriate uses. So, uh, food service is a, you know, tried and tested, um, appropriate use of parkland. And, uh, what we're— what we'd be seeking in, in broad strokes is an operator to come and renovate the structure, um, to include public restrooms and then program the space, uh, north of the building up to Rippon Street with seating that would be available for the public as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Uh, 2 more questions. So there's no demolition of the building, right? It's only, um, renovations to the actual structure.

ALEXANDER HAN: Right now the RFP is seeking a renovation, um, though we are leaving the, the option open for anyone, you know, to propose whatever their vision for the space may be.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Yeah and the rest of the mall, especially as you get closer to Riving Street, is quite unsafe and I think it probably breaks a lot of ADA laws. Uh, would you require the new RFP winner to invest in fixing that pavement, or would this have to be the work between DOT and Parks?

ALEXANDER HAN: All concession RFPs require for the concessioner to make the, uh, the the concession be ADA compliant.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Even going further off to the street, right? Because the, the building itself is like 10 feet away from Delancey, would you make the, the, the new concession owner fix the whole malls or just, um, just on Delancey Street?

ALEXANDER HAN: It's, it's really based on the proposal that we receive, um, and the license premises that we identify in the agreement. Um,

within the license premises, there's an ADA requirement for the concessionaire to complete.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Okay, so I'll just finally just add, if, if they make the Delancey side ADA accessible, we will love to have Parks or DOT or whoever manages the concession to also fix the rest of the park so it can be ADA accessible on both sides of the building.

ALEXANDER HAN: Understood, and, and we'll take that, uh, that suggestion internally and have those conversations as we, um, further develop the RFP.

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: All right, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Counsel, are there any members of the public who wish to testify remotely or in person regarding this proposal?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Uh, no, Chair, at this time we don't have anybody signed up in person or online.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: So this panel is now excused. Thank you so much.

Last call, if anyone is here to testify, if there's any members of the public who wish to testify regarding this proposal remotely, please press your raise— the raise hand button now, or if you are in

person, please identify yourself to one of the Sergeants.

Being there are no members of the public who wish to testify regarding LU's 42 LU 43 relating to the Allen Street demapping proposal, the public hearing is now closed and these items are now laid over.

I now— I will now open the public hearing on LU's numbers 38, 39, 40 regarding the 20 Berry Street Industrial Rezoning Proposal in Williamsburg, Brooklyn in Council Member Restler's district. The proposal involves a Zoning Map and a Zoning Text Amendment together with a special permit.

Applicant is seeking to build a mixed commercial and industrial building. The special permit would provide the project additional density in exchange for ensuring that a portion of the new building is reserved for industrial uses.

For anyone wishing to testify regarding the proposal remotely, if you have not already done so, you must register online by visiting the Council's website at council.nyc.gov/landuse.

For anyone with us in person, please see one of the Sergeant-at-Arms to submit a speaker card.

If you would prefer to submit written testimony, you can always do so by emailing it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. I now recognize Council Member Restler for remarks.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I'm good. Let's just jump in. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. I will now call the applicant panel for this proposal, which consists of Howard Goldman, Jay Valgora, and Chris Havens(SP?) and Hadi— Hadi Hadjar(SP?). Thank you, Council Member Restler.

Counsel, please administer the affirmation.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, good morning. First, I'm checking that you don't have any other presenters. Is— are any of your presenters on Zoom?

UNIDENTIFIED: Um, Mr. Hadjar, uh, supposed to—

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please, yes, thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: Uh, Mr. Hadjar was very much looking forward to coming, uh, this morning. He's the property owner and he's the business operator on the site. Uh, unfortunately, he, he couldn't make it this morning, so we're here.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, that's fine. I just wanted to double-check who was swearing in. So could

you please raise your right hand? Could you please state your name for the— pardon? Oh, okay, well, uh, one second. Let me first administer the oath, and then when we turn over to Council Members, you can, uh, raise any concerns.

Um, so please raise your right hand, and could you state your name for the record?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Ah, Howard Goldman.

JAY VALGORA: Jay Valgora.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony this morning and in response to Council Member questions?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Yes.

JAY VALGORA: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. You may now begin your testimony, which is limited to 8 minutes and I will, I will also ask to please restate your name and organization for the record during your presentation. You may begin.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And Madam Chair, could I just ask a favor since I'm tight on time? Could we ask for brevity in the presentation?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So don't use the full 8 minutes.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Absolutely. Uh, Howard Goldman, Zoning Counsel, to the applicant. Uh, apologies that Mr. Hadjar is not here. I will be honest with you all. I got a text from Mr. Hadjar, our client. He says, "I am at 250 Broadway in Brooklyn."

So, uh, that's why he's not here.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: You could continue with your presentation.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: I'm gonna turn it over to, um, uh, Mr. Valgora, who's the architect for the project.

JAY VALGORA: Well, in the interest of the Councilman's comment, let's just go forward and I'll try to take you through the project quickly. We think it is an extraordinary project. Um, if we go to the next— so there's a series of proposed zoning actions that deal with height setback and a public plaza and so forth. We're really looking to create a wonderful mixed-use project in the neighborhood of Williamsburg, you know, on 20 Berry Street.

Next, and so this shows the location and it shows how we're looking to, you know, slightly change the zoning map as per the details you have. Next, I'll try to keep it quite, quite councilman. And this shows how we're looking to change, you know, the district relative to the, um, uh, the I I, the I BIA, which is governing it from a zoning point of view. Next, and this shows the land use patterns, which shows that the uses we're doing are highly commensurate with the neighborhood. Next, And this shows how there are other, ah, ah, text amendments that have been made in the surrounding neighborhood that are also commensurate with the text amendment we are seeking, so it's in context with the neighborhood.

Next, and then we think there are a whole series of community benefits that include public spaces, open spaces, which will be in perpetuity. It's directly opposite McCarran Park, where there's been some wonderful improvements planned lately. And so we think this is going to be very important where there are public spaces that are associated with it. We'll show you that as well as it's going to create jobs and promote manufacturing uses, which is a key

part of the request actually, and that's mandated. Next, this is the site today, which is really just one-story building. So this isn't an applicant who's like a big-time developer. This is somebody who invested in this neighborhood for years, has built his business in this neighborhood. This neighborhood has transformed where it used to be suitable to have it just be, you know, one-story warehouse spaces. Even then, he brought in local artists and so forth to do it. And today, after many years of owning this property, he is looking to invest in the neighborhood further and create something that is more commensurate with the character of this community. Next, so this is the proposed massing. It's been very carefully considered, and it's been worked, you know, out closely with City Planning where it has a— A very detailed massing. It's set back very much from the park. It has small pavilions. It has small street-facing retail and street activation. The larger massing is set back against the William Vale Hotel, which is much, much larger.

So we think this has been carefully done, and it actually engages the park next. This shows you the ground floor plan with the public plaza and a series

of pedestrian connections that actually reinforce those public spaces. This public plaza would be, you know, public in perpetuity. It's been very carefully designed with artwork and lighting and planting using some of the best design professionals.

Next, activate all retail spaces. You can see there are a variety of uses and if you scroll through the plan that are mostly commercial in nature, that have dedicated industrial space, uh, we worked with Evergreen, which is a nonprofit community group that's heavily involved in industrial space. And they gave us all kinds of input relative to service and heights and the things necessary for that. We worked with Chris Havens to ensure that we could get small local Brooklyn retailers. This shows the public spaces, the green areas, the trees.

Next, Councilman, I'm going to just rush through this to hand it back to you and this shows the green areas and public spaces. We really tried to create something that would be very special.

Next, And this shows some of those open spaces. Keep going. With small-scale retail, green spaces. These are perspectives that show the massing of it. Very high-quality materials using brick, breaking

down the massing at the base so it relates to the neighborhood, creating green spaces that are an extension of the park, the future park improvements. Next, these show that open space on that plaza, multiple levels, how it breaks down in scale, how it opens to the south. Next, And this shows how it's very, very active from the street. Got great feedback from the community, from the whole process. Very, very positive feedback from City Planning. Next, and some details of that. Next, And then the public space with lighting, greenery, deals with kind of the riparian landscape that was originally here, an extension of McCarran Park.

Next. and also incorporating public artwork and things like that, which the client has done from the beginning. We want to work with local muralists to activate the spaces next. I will hand it back to you and answer any questions you have. Thank you.

JAY VALGORA: I'm sorry, I'm Jay Valgora. I'm principal with Studio B Architecture, I should have said that at the beginning.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you. That was the fastest presentation I've ever seen. I'm going to

ask a quick question and then hand it over to Council Member Rester.

The special permit is intended to incentivize the construction of a mixed-use building. With re— with required industrial uses. What is your tenating strategy for the required industrial space? And do you have any particular businesses or types of businesses in mind?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Um, I'll start with that. Well, first of all, uh, there is a broker, uh, Chris Havens, who's been involved with the project. He's, uh, worked with us every step of the way. In particular for the manufacturing uses, we did get the detailed input of the nonprofit Evergreen, which actually specifically deals with advocacy for small manufacturing, quote, maker uses, which is promoted by the zoning. There's a range of uses, could be distilleries, furniture, uh, makers, small crafts operations, things like that.

So we've built all that into it. We can't get actual leases, you know, until the project is approved, because as a practical matter, the market won't respond to that but we don't think we're going to have a problem because we worked with Evergreen

and they work with these organizations. So if we get approval and go forward with it, we're highly confident that we can actually lease that up.

In addition, the other retail spaces around it are all small-scaled. It's very important as we worked with Chris, he actually thinks those are better uses, but I think that promotes kind of local Brooklyn retailers.

We're not looking at big chains, things like that. We're looking at small local retailers, which we think suits this neighborhood and this community and supports that. Thank you. I'm gonna hand it over to Council Member Restler for questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thanks so much, Chair Louis and I wanna welcome Lena back. I haven't seen you. Congratulations. Nice to have you back.

Um, these are the important things. Um, okay, I, you know, Hadjar is a longtime member of our community and, uh, has been a, a good neighbor and a, uh, good business owner in our community. And, you know, I think that the broad strokes proposal here is a positive one.

Uh, I do want to just follow up on the Chair's question. You know, we've approved other IBIA models

in this immediate area, and unfortunately much of the space remains. Could you— I don't know if that was me. Um, could you just go a little bit deeper? I know Chris has worked on this, and I've pushed him on this in our conversations previously, but just on the record, why you're so confident that we can actually activate the space in this building despite the soft office market that we're seeing, despite the challenges in renting out light manufacturing industrial space in this immediate area?

JAY VALGORA: Sure. Well, first of all, we recognize the councilman's concern and appreciate actually the input and help he's given us along the way, you know, to help us try to craft the project to make it better.

Speaking for Chris a little bit, I, I changed the footprint of the building. Speaking as an architect, you know, my father worked in manufacturing and actually lost his job, and I had to get a scholarship in order to finish my architecture degree. So actually it's very meaningful for me when I grew up in an industrial community in Buffalo. So I appreciate the interest and the concern.

We designed it as a series of smaller spaces that could be subdivided. So some of the problems that some of the other projects like over on Kent Street is they have really big footprints and even though they're kind of masquerading as trying to create commercial space or maker space, that it was harder for them to lease it.

So we intentionally made it a smaller scale building, L-shaped, specifically located the cores and the elevators so they could be subdivided. Cuz the whole goal, as Chris put it, was really for small businesses. Like they could be as small as, you know, 2,000, 3,000 square feet, 5,000 square feet's probably optimal as per, Leah from Evergreen. So we kind of built the whole design around that, which I think is different from many of the other projects there.

So part of it was that, and I think part of it is also creating with the help of the community and with the councilman, certainly like really elegant public spaces that will draw people and make it more attractive. So that's been part of it and part of it was working with Evergreen to solve some of the infrastructure issues, really large elevators,

dedicated service, putting those uses primarily on the lower floors, not the ground floor, 'cause we wanted to activate that, that second and third floor. So I think those things are going to help and they're different than the other projects.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Uh, few hopefully brief questions. Uh, you've been in conversation with 32BJ. I know— can you speak to Hadjar's conversations there and how that's progressing? It's important whenever possible, uh, to ensure that we have really good jobs that are being created in the building and interested to understand where that stands.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: So, uh, Hadjar has reached out to 32BJ. They actually had a meeting scheduled, uh, a week or two ago, and it was postponed at 32BJ's request, but they're in the process of rescheduling.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, uhm, I'd like to make sure that that happens immediately.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Understood.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you. Um, I appreciated in your drawings that you built out the park space across the street. We put $15 million into redeveloping that park. With a massive green

infrastructure project below, one of Park's largest sustainability initiatives in the city right now. Um, we're— scoping meeting is in 2 months. Uh, the folks that will be working in your building every day will have a real impact on the park. And so just want to make sure that the developer understands that as the community is growing, as you're bringing more people into the neighborhood, that there's an, an expectation to support that neighborhood and hopefully provide an opportunity to support the park. Is that something that you're willing to work with us on?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Yes, absolutely. Hadjar is anxious to continue discussions about how he can help the park.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Terrific. Um, one of my major safety concerns in the area is how we, you know, always coexist between the industrial manufacturing commercial businesses and the residential community. Uh, we have a— one of— I think it's the second longest open street in New York City. That abuts your property, uh, going up to North 12th and Berry but for people who are biking

into Greenpoint beyond there, it gets pretty treacherous pretty quickly.

Uh, we would like to see some redesign of that portion of Berry into Nassau heading into Greenpoint and would love your all's collaboration and support on that effort.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Yeah, the client is fully in support of doing that. He's not happy with the traffic situation either.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great.

JAY VALGORA: He's an avid cyclist.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTlER: Yeah, we've had preliminary conversations with DOT about reversing traffic from North 12th to North 14th, um, and we think that could be a good way to ensure that trucks are able to get in and out of the neighborhood, but it's safer for everyone, and hopefully with a two-way protected bike lane. Um, so we look forward to hopefully working on that together.

And then similarly, this building is within the catchment area for the new Northside Business Improvement District that we're working on. And so we're just wanting to make sure that everybody who's building in the community, who's going to be bringing

a lot of new businesses to the community, understands the value that the bid, uh, will bring. Um, does Hadjar have a position on the bid?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: He's on board with the BID.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Terrific. Um, and then lastly, you know, creating a couple hundred thousand square feet of commercial space, excited about supporting light manufacturing, small commercial businesses, all of the, the vision of what you're all hoping to achieve here. Um, would love if there was an opportunity for us to identify nonprofits as well that could have a home here. Is that something you're willing to work with us on?

HOWARD GOLDMAN: The answer is yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Okay, well, I have to say, I think this is a positive project. I think it's always a beautiful thing when somebody from our community who's done work for decades in our community wants to continue to see our community grow. Um, it's, uh, I think that's a really wonderful model.

So thank you, gentlemen, for the presentation today. Uh, and, uh, I hope Hadjar's having a good time in Williamsburg somewhere. Um, I don't know if

you've calmed down, Councilmember Felder, but I'm in an okay place.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Council Member Felder, do you have a question?

Council Member Felder, do you want to ask a question to the— no? All right, all right. Thank you, Council Member Restler, I'm a little jealous, you get all the good things in your district. Invite me. All right, um, this is my last question and I'll dismiss this panel. The applic— the application seeks to reduce loading berths from 8 to 2. Is 2 berths sufficient to accommodate retail, restaurant, office, and industrial deliveries without causing congestion or double parking on North 13th Street?

JAY VALGORA: Hmm, it's a great question, but we did work carefully with Evergreen to go through the loading requirements, and it's fully off-street loading, so the trucks pull all the way in, and we also have very large freight elevators, which is unusual, but we're dedicating that to the project.

So I do feel it'll be sufficient.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Great. All right, this panel is now excused. Thank you so much.

JAY VALGORA: Thank you very much.

HOWARD GOLDMAN: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: I think all my colleagues asked all their questions. Anybody has questions? All right, we have questions, comments.

Counsel, are there any members of the public who wish to testify remotely or in person regarding this proposal?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No, Chair, at this time no one has signed up, uh, in person or online to testify.

CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Alright, last call. If there are any members of the public who wish to testify regarding this Proposal remotely, please press the raise hand button now. If you are in person, please identify yourself to one of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Being there are no members of the public who wish to testify regarding LU's 38, 39, and 40 relating to 20 Berry Street Industrial Rezoning Proposal, the public hearing is now closed and these items are now laid over.

That concludes today's business. I would like to thank the members of the public, my colleagues, Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use and other Council staff, and the Sergeant-at-Arms for participating in

today's meeting. This meeting is now hereby adjourned. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.

Date April 14, 2026