

Michael Blaise Backer Statement on Proposed MetroTech BID
Expansion
Before City Council Finance Committee
December 7, 2015

Good morning Chair Ferreras-Copeland and members of the Finance Committee. I am Michael Blaise Backer, Deputy Commissioner of Neighborhood Development at the Department of Small Business Services (SBS). I am joined by our Executive Director of Neighborhood Development, Kris Goddard, and our BID Program Director, Jennifer Kitson. We are here to testify in support of the expansion of the MetroTech Business Improvement District (BID) into the Brooklyn Cultural District.

As the oversight agency for the City's BID program, SBS oversees the BID formation and expansion process, and serves as an advisor and resource for BID expansion steering committees. SBS will only introduce BID proposals into the legislative process if we believe that the steering committee has followed the planning process correctly, solicited robust community input, and has sought to collect and demonstrate broad based support across all stakeholder groups.

Speaking specifically to the Brooklyn Cultural District, it has been an important priority of the de Blasio administration to develop a mechanism by which to ensure the proper maintenance of the public investment in the area's public spaces and sidewalks. Because there are already four BIDs abutting the Brooklyn Cultural District, and given both the small geography and the number of non-assessment paying properties, SBS determined that the expansion of 2 BIDs—MetroTech and FAB Alliance—was preferable to creating an entirely new BID. We expect to be here discussing the proposed FAB Alliance expansion in a few weeks.

SBS initiated an inclusive process with the local stakeholders, including DBP, FAB Alliance, and many of the cultural organizations and large local property owners, on developing the precise boundaries for the 2 BID expansions taking place in order to cover the entire cultural district. The expansion steering committee proceeded to hold numerous meetings, and SBS attended every one of them, to ensure the administration's input was being incorporated.

We were encouraged by DBP's extensive outreach effort to the residential and commercial community, and of the responses received, there was overwhelming support. Considering the high proportion of documented

assessed value support, the transparent and inclusive planning process, and exhaustive outreach efforts to all stakeholder groups, SBS determined that the BID expansion proposal was ready for CPC and Finance Committee submission.

As required by law, the MetroTech BID Expansion 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:

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

In addition, SBS arranged for the publication of a copy of the summary of the Resolution at least once in the City Record.

It is also important to note this BID expansion proposal has received the written support of Brooklyn BP Eric Adams, Council Members Laurie Cumbo and Stephen Levin, and Community Board 2.

The BID expansion effort is represented here today by DBP staff, existing BID board members, and members of the BID Expansion Steering Committee, all of whom will be available to address any specific questions that I am unable to answer.

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

**City Council Finance Committee Testimony Tucker Reed, Downtown Brooklyn
Partnership
December 7, 2015**

Chairperson Ferreras-Copeland and fellow committee members.

Thank you for your time today to discuss the expansion of the MetroTech Business Improvement District. My name is Tucker Reed and I'm the president of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. We are a local economic development corporation that is the managing agent for the Fulton Mall Improvement Association, the Court Livingston Schermerhorn Business Improvement District and the MetroTech BID.

For three years the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, at the request of area stakeholders, has explored the formulation of a new Business Improvement District to cover areas of the Brooklyn Cultural District and the Atlantic Mall, Terminal and Center. To be frank, given the history and the area's complexity, it's a marvel we stand before you today.

All told this neighborhood has been the focus of \$100 million of public investment and is currently undergoing a major construction boom to complete the long planned Brooklyn Cultural District. The next two years will see an addition of 300,000+ square feet of new commercial office space; over 1,000 new residential units, nine cultural institutions, over 100,000 sf of new street level retail and close to 32,000 SF of public space including four city owned public plazas. The expansion area also encompasses the highly trafficked Atlantic Center, Terminal and Mall as well as the busy DeKalb corridor leading from Brooklyn Tech High School to Flatbush Avenue.

This incredible variety of uses also poses unique challenges when it comes to fairness as there are numerous exempt properties because of the cultural institutions, lack of commercial density, mostly residential development compounded by a preponderance of public space.

To ensure fairness a steering committee comprised of 25 diverse area stakeholders, including property owners, business owners, residents, cultural groups and a representative of

Community Board 2 was formed to guide the creation of a maintenance entity to cover these new and invaluable assets.

The committee undertook an extensive and transparent outreach process to ensure current property owners, residents and business owners understood the value of this expansion. We went door to door along DeKalb Avenue, worked with Condo Boards to communicate with tenants directly, and met personally with whoever would have us. Our efforts received overwhelming support.

Because the expansion area has many residential properties, an additional voting-resident will be added to the MetroTech board, making a total of three and permanent non-voting seat for Community Board 2. Furthermore, a residential advisory committee comprised of residents, both renters and owners, in the district will be created. This committee will meet with the board to provide additional insight into concerns or requests they may have.

We are also very excited about the public programming potential for the area. It is a rare opportunity to have nine cultural institutions within a few blocks, even rarer for them to partner and create world class public programming. The cultural groups were thoroughly enmeshed in the planning process BAM, BRIC, Mark Morris and Theatre for a New Audience all served on the steering committee and will form the core of a Cultural Programming committee to determine and plan future activities. There will also be a non-voting board seat for the cultural institutions that will rotate amongst the different groups.

Thank you for your time today and look forward to any questions you may have.

**City Council Finance Committee Testimony David Lombino Two Trees
December 7, 2015**

Chairperson Ferreras-Copeland and fellow committee members.

My name is David Lombino and I am the Director of Special Projects at Two Trees. Today I speak to you in my capacity as the chair of the steering committee to expand the MetroTech BID. Two Trees will also be the largest residential property owner in the expansion area upon completion of our project at the Brooklyn Cultural District South Site on Lafayette between Ashland and Flatbush Avenue, a project that went through URLURP.

The area included in this expansion effort is already one of the busiest in the borough. With the completion of the development projects in the Brooklyn Cultural District this will be magnified several fold. It will be one of the most unique neighborhoods in the borough, nine cultural groups, four of which will have facilities in our building, will bring millions of visitors every year; Thousands of new residents will call the area home and beautiful new public spaces, including the 16,000 SF plaza we are constructing, will serve a diverse population of new office workers, residents, cultural patrons and shoppers frequenting the numerous new retail options these developments will bring. It is imperative to maintain this new jewel in the crown of Brooklyn to the highest of standards.

As a residential property owner and a strong advocate of BIDs, Two Trees was instrumental in the creation of the DUMBO BID and owns a residential building in the Court Livingston Schermerhorn BID, we believe this expansion effort is vital not only from a property owner perspective but also as a benefit to our future residents. We are very sensitive to their needs and impressed with the outreach efforts to current area residents to explain this proposal in detail. In fact the entire process was very thorough and transparent.

We strongly believe the expansion in its current form is the best solution to a complicated issue, one that not only equitably distributes the cost to ensure the greatest degree of fairness, but also ensures the highest level of service that benefits the various stakeholders in the area.

I ask you to support this expansion effort and vote yes to approve it.

**City Council Finance Committee Testimony Keith Stubblefield, BAM
December 7, 2015**

Chairperson Ferreras-Copeland and fellow committee members.

My name is Keith Stubblefield, I serve as the Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Finance and Administration for the Brooklyn Academy of Music and am here today not only representing BAM but the nine cultural organizations that will call the expanded MetroTech BID home. The development of this area has been in the planning stages for nearly three decades and it is nothing short of remarkable that in two short years it will be brought to fruition.

BAM has a long history of neighborhood engagement. We work very closely with local elected officials, community groups and partners to ensure the residents of the immediate area are provided with the highest quality programming. Since this is our home we care deeply about the neighborhood and one of my staff has Chaired the FAB Alliance since its inception over 5 years ago. We know how beneficial BIDS can be all. BAM also serves on the board of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership and has been please at the accomplishments of the organization in its young existence.

Throughout the expansion planning process, with BAM on the Steering Committee, equity among stakeholders was at the forefront of every discussion. As an institution deeply rooted in the community we were impressed with the transparency and delicacy of the outreach efforts. Understanding that numerous properties in the expansion area are exempt, ours included, it was not easy to find a solution that was fair to all parties.

The four largest cultural groups in the area understand we will be huge beneficiaries of this effort and as such have agreed to collectively contribute \$10,000 annually to the BID's programming budget. Furthermore, we will provide our expertise to develop top quality programming in the area's new public spaces. We look forward to working with area stakeholders to further these plans

When the construction fences come down, this will not only be the most exciting neighborhood in Brooklyn, it will also be a tourist magnet, drawing visitors from all over the world to experience the unique cultural programming that can only be found in the Brooklyn Cultural District.

BAM and the area's other cultural groups fully support this effort and respectfully ask you approve the expansion plan.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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