

SBS Statement on Proposed Morris Park BID
Before City Council Finance Committee
October 31, 2017

Good morning Chair Ferreras-Copeland and members of the Finance Committee. I am Kris Goddard, Assistant Commissioner of Neighborhood Development at the Department of Small Business Services (SBS). I am joined by our Senior Program Manager for BID Development, LeMel Lindsey. We are here to testify in support of the proposed Morris Park Business Improvement District (BID).

At SBS, we are working hard to open doors for New Yorkers across the five boroughs – focusing on creating stronger businesses, connecting New Yorkers to good jobs, and fostering thriving neighborhoods. We believe that the vitality of the City’s commercial corridors is a key part of achieving this goal, and BIDs have been valuable and proven partners in revitalization and economic development across all five boroughs.

In addition to our role overseeing and supporting the City’s existing network of 74 BIDs, SBS also supervises the BID formation and expansion process, 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 our data and best practices from across the BID network 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.

Like other recent BID formations that SBS has overseen, the Morris Park 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 – including over 50% of the area's total assessed value providing written support in favor – was sufficient to submit the application to City Council.

As required by law, the Morris Park 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 proposed district 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 district, and
- to tenants of each building within the proposed district.

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

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Council Member James Vacca for his ongoing support of the Morris Park BID formation effort.

I would also like to thank Council Member Ritchie Torres for his support of the Morris Park BID formation effort.

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.

New York City Council Hearing
October 31, 2017
Morris Park Business Improvement District

Good morning members of the Council: I appreciate you having us here this morning. I am here to discuss the Morris Park Business Improvement District, its history, its desires and the prospects moving forward. My name is William Pedone and I am the current Morris Park Business Improvement District Steering Committee Chairman. I have been the chairman for a little over two years.

I would like to give you a little history. In late 2007/2008, we began discussing the potential for a Business Improvement District (BID) in the Morris Park section of the Bronx. That discussion was taken up by Councilman James Vacca and the now defunct Morris Park Business Alliance. The momentum went nowhere. In about 2011, momentum picked up again for the rebuilding the Morris Park Corridor.

The committee reached out to all property owners, commercial tenants, and residents to discuss the potential for a BID. In 2015, we were provided with additional staffing and funding from Councilman James Vacca. A strong outreach was done, and surveys were taken. The stakeholders decided on five key services (sanitation, branding, marketing, retail attraction, and beautification) and a budget was established.

The area is a middle-class area, my family has been there since the late 1800's three or four generations. We have seen the good, bad and ugly. Our collective goal is to improve safety, appearance, develop better infrastructure, and home ownership. Right now, we are not on the City's radar. The City has a lot on their hands and we are here to work with the City, join forces to help Morris Park keep its charm while keeping up with the times.

William Pedone
Chairman, Morris Park Steering Committee

TESTIMONY FOR PROPOSED MORRIS PARK BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT.

HISTORY: The Morris Park BID Steering Committee was formed in 2013 on the coat-tails of the successful BID development effort undertaken in nearby Westchester Square. The sponsoring organization was the Morris Park Alliance, a volunteer merchant association that gathered a group of 31 commercial property owners, commercial tenants, area residents and community leaders to begin the development process. Supported by a grant from Councilmember James Vacca, the Bronx Chamber of Commerce was enlisted to assist in organization and outreach efforts.

The passage of time witnessed the disbanding of the Alliance when its leaders retired, moved away or fell victim to the demands of business. In a turn of events that speaks loudly of the dedication of the area's stakeholders, the Morris Park Community Association - a 40-year-old resident organization - assumed the role of sponsor. The Chamber was succeeded by NIDC (the Neighborhood Initiatives Development Corporation) and in March of 2016, the Westchester Square BID was brought in to restart outreach efforts and wrap-up the loose ends of the project.

THE PLAN: During the Chamber's tenure, a survey of commercial property owners, merchants, residents and consumers was undertaken to assess area needs. The results of the survey uncovered a strong need for:

- a business plan for the business district
- the engagement of a paid ombudsman to guide area advocacy
- the establishment and promotion of a strong district image
- an increase in consumer foot traffic
- graffiti cleanup and enhanced sanitation services
- the maintenance of a safe community environment

Based on the survey, a plan was established that includes a full time Executive Director to oversee programs and services that include sanitation services, a comprehensive marketing plan, a streetscape program and branding initiative, and collaboration with and support of the existing civilian safety patrol run by the Community Association. A budget of \$390,000 was adopted, approximately 75% of which is dedicated to these efforts. The Committee also plans to undertake additional commercial development efforts, once the BID is established, with funding and resources from local "anchors" just outside the BID district, and by taking advantage of grant programs available in the community.

SUPPORT: Outreach for this effort was extensive and included the execution of multiple mailings to all the stakeholders, presentations at community board meetings, community association meetings, and merchant gatherings, and in hundreds of one-on-one conversations with home, business and commercial property owners. In addition, 2 public hearings were held in the district, so stakeholders could question board members and employees of other established BIDs, employees of the Department of Small Business Services, and local elected officials. Statements of Support were collected by the outreach team to document support.

ASSESSMENT: The committee considered several formulas for the equitable establishment of assessment fees to pay for the plan. These included formulas based on assessed property value, square footage, front footage, building structure, etc. and combinations of these factors. Based on the low-density environment of the district, a front footage formula was adopted for commercial and mixed-use properties, with an additional \$300 per year for corner properties, and \$300 per year for properties with commercial usage above the first floor. Vacant lots are assessed at \$300 per year. Vacant lots on corners are assessed an additional \$300 per year for the corner. Residential properties occupied for residential use are assessed at \$1 per year. Government and not-for-profit owned and operated properties are exempt from assessment.

Presented by:

John Bonizio, Chairman
Westchester Square District Management Association

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1737 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/31/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kris Goddard

Address: _____

I represent: Asst. Commissioner, Small Business Services

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1737 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10-31-17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: William C. PEDONE

Address: 669 MORRIS PARK AVE, BRONX

I represent: MORRIS PARK BUSINESS IMPR DISTRICT

Address: SAME Comm Chair

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ~~1737~~ ¹⁷³⁷⁻ 2017 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/31/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOHN BONIZIO

Address: 25 WESTCHESTER SQ.

I represent: MORRIS PARK B.I.D. COMMITTEE

Address: - SAME -

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms