

Testimony of behalf

of

Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

for the public hearing regarding the establishment of the Bed-Stuy Gateway Business Improvement District

Finance Committee of the New York City Council

Wednesday, February 11, 2009 | City Hall City Council Committee Room

Good morning Chairman Weprin, Councilman Vann and members of the Finance Committee.

My name is Joel Dabu. I am the Director of Commercial Revitalization for Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation and the manager of the initiative to form the Bed-Stuy Gateway Business Improvement District.

Councilman Weprin, I thank you for allowing the proposal to establish the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID to be heard before your committee.

And to you Councilman Vann, I extend the warmest and most sincere thanks from myself, and from Colvin Grannum, President/CEO, the board and staff of Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation for your unwavering vision of the holistic improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant and its residents, and your consistent and steadfast commitment over many years towards initiatives that help the community achieve that result. Please also accept my personal gratitude for your leadership in assisting the effort to form a business improvement district to Bedford Stuyvesant.

I speak to you today to request that you vote yes on the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID Steering Committee's proposal to establish the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID, an initiative in which Restoration is currently a technical assistance partner and will be a property owning and assessment paying member.

Restoration has been a steward of the Central Brooklyn community for the last 41 years. Through a comprehensive slate of programming that spans housing preservation and development, arts & culture, youth education, workforce development, personal asset building, and local economic development, Restoration has sought to ensure that Central Brooklyn is a community built on a wide and solid foundation.

I am pleased to introduce the two co-chairmen of the BID Steering Committee: Edmon Braithwaite, owner of multiple successful businesses in Bedford-Stuyvesant including Nostrand Wines & Liquors and One Caribbean Radio; and Noah Katz, Vice President of PSK Supermarkets, a family-owned and operated business which operates Super Foodtown of Bedford-Stuyvesant and numerous other Foodtown grocery stores throughout the region. Many

other members of the Steering Committee and the wider business community are also present here today.

For over two decades, there has been a desire from many segments of the community for physical and economic improvement in this business district. Merchants get ticketed constantly for the litter strewn on the sidewalks and facade graffiti that goes unpainted. Neighborhood residents who live only two blocks away bypass the shopping street for farther, more visually appealing destinations like Park Slope's 7th Avenue or Myrtle Avenue in Fort Greene. Potential small business owners and retailers are scared away by signs of physical disinvestment and open their new businesses elsewhere, despite our 100,000 residents within a 1-mile radius.

The proposed BID will strengthen Central Brooklyn's local economy by encouraging residents to shop locally and entrepreneurs to invest locally. The 2008 Bed-Stuy Gateway LISC MetroEdge Retail Scan commissioned by the Business Vitality Network of the Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford-Stuyvesant found that Bedford-Stuyvesant contained \$595 million dollars of concentrated buying power per square mile; 30% greater than Brooklyn and 50% greater than Queens at large. Residential density and buying power for the one mile radius around the Fulton Street is more than strong enough to support a robust commercial corridor, but at present, fully half of that buying power leaks away to other shopping districts in other communities.

In mid-2006, the Fulton-Nostrand United Merchants Association, whose president, Hardy Joe Long, is here this morning - decided to enter into a partnership with Restoration to begin the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID initiative.

In early 2007, the first meeting of the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID Steering Committee convened. The very first task this Steering Committee undertook was to put on record in unambiguous terms the purpose of their work and for the BID that they desired to create.

I would like to read you the vision statement of the BID Steering Committee which was adopted on February 20, 2007.

"We Declare that the Bed-Stuy Gateway Business District is the business and cultural destination of choice for all residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Clinton Hill, northern Crown Heights, Ocean Hill and Brownsville.

Through the services of the BID, We are committed to:

- ***A safe, clean and aesthetically attractive commercial and cultural destination***
- ***Fostering thriving and profitable businesses***
- ***Providing a variety of retail goods and services from a mixture of national brand and locally-based companies, including minority and women-owned small businesses***
- ***Valuing the diverse history, culture and styles of the residents of the Bedford-Stuyvesant and wider Central-Brooklyn communities by offering goods and services that respond to the community's wants and desires. "***

The members of the Steering Committee wanted there to be no mistake; Although they wanted to transform the look, feel and functioning of their business district, the primary focus of their work would be to ensure the rise of a business district in which locally-owned, independent businesses thrived, especially minority and women-owned enterprises, and a district that is safe, pleasant, and that can truly be called and function as the main street of Central Brooklyn.

This is the vision that has guided all planning of the BID since 2007.

In the two years that have elapsed since the first meeting, the Steering Committee adopted the plan for the BID that is now before you for your consideration.

The Bed-Stuy Gateway BID is an ambitious and truly visionary plan for a neighborhood BID. The plan is designed to be affordable, yet have a budget large enough - at \$675,000 annually - to effect significant visible change from day one of operations. The last thing the Steering Committee members wanted to happen was for BID members and the community to fail to see substantive change in the business district because the BID is handicapped by an inadequate and thus wasted budget.

After the adoption of the BID's District Plan, the Steering Committee has sat in private meetings with numerous property owners, sent four rounds of informational mailings or notices, held three public scoping meetings on March 5, 13 and 18, 2008 to solicit input from property owners on the proposal, two public hearings on May 8 and 28, 2008 and a public hearing before Community Board #3 on May 5, 2008. The BID has received television coverage on Brooklyn 12 News and New York 1 News, editorial copy in the New York Daily News, Crains NY Business, Our Time Press and has been featured during the Toast to Bedford-Stuyvesant event in 2007 and 2008. The Steering Committee has provided numerous means of outreach to interested parties, and the co-chairman and other members of the committee have personally talked with those who have expressed views for and against the BID. However, to date, the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID has received overwhelming approval from the property owners who have responded to our ballot. Most sensible people, property and business owners alike, see that significant change is needed in order for them to increase the value of their property investments, to attract better quality and more diverse retail offerings, and increased numbers of customers.

The BID is called Bed-Stuy Gateway to differentiate this BID from other Fulton Street entities throughout the City, to reflect on the role that the streets contained in the BID play in bringing people to Bedford-Stuyvesant due to the abundant public transit located therein, and to connect the BID to its Bedford-Stuyvesant location.

Lastly, one of the primary goals of the creation of the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID in addition to increasing local consumer spending, is to create the conditions in the district that attract further public and private investment. In this regard, the vision for the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID is already a success before day one.

With funding from the Office of Management and Budget, Borough President Marty Markowitz, NYC's Comprehensive Neighborhood Economic Development Initiative and of course, our Councilman Vann, Restoration was able to attract \$9.0 million for a streetscape beautification

project that will provide for a more pleasant shopping district. This money would not have been able to come to Bedford-Stuyvesant were it not for the plans for the formation of the BID, which the City Agencies required to exist in order to take responsibility for the future maintenance of the streetscape. Your vote to approve the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID will allow us to begin construction on the beautiful new streetscape by late Fall of this year.

I stand here on the shoulders of many people who have worked tirelessly before me in Bedford-Stuyvesant over the last 25 years to bring the benefits of BID management to Central Brooklyn's main street. In addition to the people I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, I would like to thank my colleague Bernice McRae for her knowledge and guidance, the members of Community Board #3, the Brownstoners of Bedford-Stuyvesant Civic Association, and the late Tohma Faulkner – among other roles, a member of the BID Steering Committee and one of our tireless advocates – for all of their support for the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID and the revitalization of the business district.

Please vote to approve to formation of the Bed-Stuy Gateway BID and help Central Brooklyn gain the shopping district it deserves.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Dabu
Director of Commercial Revitalization
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Gateway*

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/11/09

NOAH KATZ

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: 1420 FULTON STREET BROOK

I represent: SUPER FOODTOWN IN RESTORATION PLAZA

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*BedSty
Gateway*

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/11/09

Wendy J. ...

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: 535 ...

I represent: FULTON RESTORED MERCHANTS ASSN.

Address: 1368 FULTON STREET

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Bed - John
Gateway*

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

JAMES E. ROBINSON

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: 1368 FULTON ST, B'K NY 11216

I represent: COALITION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF BED-STY

Address: 1368 FULTON ST, B'K NY 11216

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

BED STUY
GATEWAY

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/11/09

Name: Joel DABU (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 1368 Fulton Street, 11216

I represent: Bed-Stuy Restoration Corp

Address: 1368 Fulton Street, 11216

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Jeremy Waldrup (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 110 Williams

I represent: SBS

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

BEDSTUY
GATEWAY

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2.11.09

Name: EDMON H BRADTHWAITE (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 551 NOSTRAND AVE

I represent: FULTON NOSTRAND MERCHANTS ASSN

Address: 1368 FULTON ST, BROOKLYN NY 11216