

Michael Blaise Backer Statement on Proposed Downtown Flushing Expansion
Before City Council Finance Committee
February 11, 2020

Good morning Chair Dromm 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 Roxanne Earley, Director of the BID Program, and LeMel Lindsey, Senior Program Manager for BID Development. We are here to testify in support of the extension of the Downtown Flushing Business Improvement District (BID) in Queens.

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 small business support, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development across all five boroughs.

In addition to our role overseeing and supporting the City’s existing network of 76 BIDs, SBS also supervises the BID formation and expansion process, serving as an advisor and resource for communities interested in planning 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 demonstrate broad-based support across all stakeholder groups.

Moreover, we are cognizant of the importance and unique nature of each community we assist and aim to create greater capacity and sustainability for the organizations that we support. In 2016, two years after the BID expansion steering committee was initially formed, the Downtown Flushing BID was selected by SBS as a partner organization in SBS’ inaugural year of its Neighborhood 360 program. Through this program, the Downtown Flushing BID and the Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce worked closely with SBS to conduct a Commercial District Needs Assessment, which identified challenges and opportunities in the Downtown Flushing area. Equipped with findings from the CDNA and a subsequent

Neighborhood 360 grant, the Downtown Flushing BID was able to strategically address challenges in the growing commercial areas of the neighborhood and provide services to nearly 1000 businesses outside of its boundaries, strengthening the relationship between the BID and the wider Flushing community. Furthermore, the grant allowed the BID to hire additional staff to kickstart extensive stakeholder engagement and outreach to successfully document expansion support.

Similar to other recent BID expansions, the Downtown Flushing Expansion effort involved numerous meetings with local stakeholders. After extensive outreach and close coordination with key stakeholders, SBS determined that the documented support among all stakeholder groups – including over 50% of the area’s total assessed value signing in favor – was sufficient to submit the application to City Planning.

As required by law, the Downtown Flushing 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 proposed district at the address shown on the latest City assessment roll,
- To such 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 Peter Koo for their ongoing support of the Downtown Flushing BID expansion effort.

I would like to acknowledge that the BID expansion effort is also represented here today by the Executive Director of the Downtown Flushing BID and members of the expansion steering committee who will also be providing testimony and answering questions.

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

Testimony of Ms. Tina Lee

Executive Director, Downtown Flushing Business Improvement District (BID)

Before City Council Finance Committee

Re: Proposed Expansion of the Downtown Flushing BID

February 11, 2020

Good morning. I'm Tina Lee, Co-chair of the Flushing BID and chair of the expansion steering committee. I am also a property and business owner in the district. As a major transit HUB in NYC with the 7 train, Long Island Railroad and over 20 bus lines; Flushing has the enviable position of never being short of foot traffic. Yet the explosive growth since the formation of the BID in 2003 has meant increased density of pedestrians, vehicles and businesses resulting in greater need for expanded services. Our steering committee, including stakeholders from both the existing district and expansion area, recognizes the positive impact of the BID's work on improving the quality of life in the district and desires to extend that to neighboring streets. The proposed BID Expansion will include more businesses in our community and allow us to provide more comprehensive services to our community and our local businesses.

For 16 years, **with no increase in assessment**, our BID has worked to support and develop Downtown Flushing into the bustling commercial center and dining destination with diverse businesses including hotels, comprehensive medical services, educational services, financial banks, and various retailers. Through supplemental sanitation services, beautification projects, and marketing initiatives; we have worked hard to provide a clean and safe environment for our growing commercial sectors and local consumers. The Flushing BID has been active in planning business promotions to support local businesses as well as guides to connect consumers with businesses and resource fairs and workshops connecting businesses and NYC resources to assist businesses with the competitive and challenging business environment. In order to keep pace with the community's needs, we are looking forward to this expansion to be able to serve our community to the fullest.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in support the Flushing BID expansion.

Testimony of Dian
Executive Director, Downtown Flushing Business Improvement District (BID)
Before City Council Finance Committee
Re: Proposed Expansion of the Downtown Flushing BID

February 11, 2020

Good Morning, Chair Dromm and Members of the Finance Committee. My name is Dian Yu, Executive Director of the Downtown Flushing Business Improvement District

As the food capital of Queens, Downtown Flushing is home to over 1,000 businesses with 200 of them being restaurants. As the busiest transit hub of all New York City's boroughs, we have over a hundred thousand pedestrians walking along Main Street daily. Although our job is a challenge, we have consistently provided supplemental services to the current BID district. For fiscal year 19 some of our services included:

- 1) Supplemental sanitation services – 15,000 hours
- 2) Holiday lighting – from November to January
- 3) Marketing – 10,000 copies of the Restaurant and Transit Hub Guide distributed
- 4) Newly added power wash and large-scale graffiti removal services

While the BID has been successful in improving our area, it has become clear that the needs and challenges of the neighborhood has greatly exceed our BID boundaries.

Over the past few years, our organization received requests from multiple businesses along Union Street and Prince St. asking the BID to provide services in their area. Businesses complaints have included concerns about traffic management, sanitation, graffiti and dirty tree pits.

Based on the feedback we received, a Steering Committee was formed, and we worked with SBS to put together a proposed BID expansion plan consisting of the following key components:

- The proposed boundaries of the expansion area generally include properties along College point boulevard, main street and union street.
- The proposed expansion area consists of a total of 2,073 tax lots, 509 commercial
- The proposed Services would be consistent with those offered by the BID: sanitation, marketing, beautification, and advocacy as well as pedestrian management
- To cover these additional services, the Steering Committee has proposed a budget of \$1 million dollars.

During the expansion process, Councilman Koo's support and SBS's 360 Neighborhood Grant allowed the BID to provide much-needed services to stakeholders in the expansion area.

Many of the supplemental services provided have improved the overall environment and has received positive feedbacks from the property and business owners. The expansion will allow the Downtown Flushing BID to further aid and provide our local businesses with more constant and comprehensive support for many years.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1854 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/11/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL BLAISE BUCKER

Address: 1 LIBERTY STREET

I represent: NYC SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: FEB 2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BAYCO JACOBI

Address: 478 ROCKAWAY BLVD

I represent: COALITION OF THE ROCKAWAY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: FEB 11/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BAYCO JACOBI

Address: 478 ROCKAWAY BLVD

I represent: COALITION OF THE ROCKAWAY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1854 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/11/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tina Lee

Address: _____

I represent: Downtown Flushing Transit Hub

Address: 135-20 39th Ave, Flushing NY 11354

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1854 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/21/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dian Song Yu

Address: _____

I represent: Downtown Flushing Transit Hub

Address: 135-20 39th Ave Flushing NY 11354

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