

In Re Public Hearing NYC - Department of Small Business Services
November 19, 2024

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PUBLIC HEARING OF THE NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES
THE GOWANUS BUSINESS RELOCATION GRANT PROGRAM

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Held Remotely
Via Microsoft Teams

DATE: November 19, 2024
TIME: 11:05 a.m.

1 MS. AHMED: Good morning. Today is
2 November 19th. The time is 11:05. Welcome,
3 and thank you for joining the New York City
4 Department of Small Business Services public
5 hearing. This is a public hearing that is
6 being held pursuant to the New York City
7 Administrative Code, also known as CAPA. My
8 name is Shormina Ahmed. I am an associate
9 general counsel at SBS.

10 The purpose of this hearing is to
11 receive comments from the public on the
12 proposed rules regarding the Gowanus Business
13 Relocation Grant Program. The proposed rule
14 was published in the City Record on
15 October 15, 2024. The Department has
16 disseminated a copy of the rules to
17 interested parties. The rules were also
18 posted on SBS's website and the New York City
19 Rules.

20 The proposed rules were certified by
21 the New York City Department of Law and the
22 New York City Mayor's Office of Operation.
23 The proposed rule describes the eligibility
24 criteria, application process for the Gowanus
25 Business Grant Relocation Program. The

1 program will help businesses that were
2 directly displaced by the City's rezoning of
3 the Gowanus area in Brooklyn and suffered
4 direct business losses due to the rezoning by
5 offsetting moving costs up to \$50,000.

6 Now, at this time, members of the
7 public will be given the opportunity to give
8 their testimony.

9 And at this time, is Council Member
10 Shahana Hanif present to testify? Council
11 Member, are you present to testify today?

12 (No response).

13 MS. AHMED: Council Member Hanif, are
14 you on the call to testify and give your
15 testimony for this CAPA hearing?

16 (No response).

17 MS. AHMED: Okay. Seems that Council
18 Member Hanif is not on the call right now,
19 but if she joins later on, she will provide
20 testimony.

21 Is there anyone else on the call that
22 is present today, that can provide testimony
23 or would like to provide testimony for this
24 hearing?

25 Yes, Mr. Brady Meixell, could you hear

1 us?

2 MR. MEIXELL: Yes, I can.

3 Can you hear me okay?

4 MS. AHMED: Yes. I can hear you and I
5 can see you. You have three minutes for your
6 testimony. You can start right now.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. MEIXELL: Well, thank you so much.

9 My name is Brady Meixell. I'm the
10 government relations and Business Services
11 manager over the Southwest Brooklyn
12 Industrial Development Corporation. We were
13 heartened at the creation of the Gowanus
14 Business Relocation Grant. The fear that the
15 text to this grant as proposed falls short of
16 the sprit of the point of agreement
17 negotiations associated with the Gowanus
18 neighborhood rezoning. Specifically, we
19 believe that this grant text currently falls
20 short on two aspects; geography and the
21 reliance on nonconforming languages.

22 So, the text proposed considers the
23 Gowanus neighborhood to only be the area
24 encompassed by the rezoning itself and leaves
25 out the vitally important Gowanus industrial

1 business side just south of the rezoning
2 portion. However, the Gowanus IBZ is a vital
3 portion of this neighborhood and its
4 businesses have the potential to be affected
5 by the changes wrought in the rezoning. This
6 was demonstrated by the Department of City
7 Planning undertaking the Gowanus IBZ vision
8 plan in concurrence with the Gowanus
9 neighborhood planning study.

10 Moreover, several commitments the City
11 agreed to in the POAs pertained specifically
12 to the IBZ. And, also, there are commitments
13 related to other areas outside of the strict
14 boundaries of the rezoning area, include the
15 capital commitments made to the NYCHA
16 Housing. During negotiations over the
17 business grant, we believe that it was
18 understood by the actors involved to also
19 pertain to the IBZ, where the bulk of small
20 industrial businesses are located in
21 neighborhood blocks.

22 And then secondly, within the four
23 eligibility criteria in the POA, nothing is
24 mentioned about the grant strictly being
25 available to those businesses affected by the

1 land use change, particularly considering
2 changes made by the City of Yes for Economic
3 Opportunity, which allowed for greater
4 mixed-use and more light industrial uses in
5 commercial corridors, the pool of eligible
6 businesses with subsequent nonconforming use
7 does not fully encompass potential impacts.

8 The intent of this grant was to provide
9 relocation funding should a business be
10 displaced due to the rezoning, which would be
11 caused by rent increases or increases or
12 operational difficulties brought by changing
13 area users, not by direct land use change, as
14 a nonconforming use allows grandfathered
15 businesses to stay in their location.
16 Looking to the success of the Greenspoint
17 Williamsburg Relocation Program as precedent,
18 there was no requirement for an eligible
19 business to have been nonconforming. The
20 prior SBS grant was administered simply on
21 the basis of a business moving out of the
22 eligible area.

23 For these reasons, we ask that the
24 proposed text of the Gowanus Small Business
25 Relocation Grant Program be changed to make

1 small businesses eligible, both in the
2 rezoning area and the abutting Gowanus IBZ,
3 and the stipulation requiring a business to
4 become nonconforming, according to the zoning
5 district designations adopted November 23,
6 2021 be removed.

7 I thank you so much for your time
8 today, and we've also submitted this in
9 written form as well, so you can see a copy
10 of these remarks. Thank you.

11 MS. AHMED: Thank you very much for
12 your testimony today.

13 At this time, is there anyone else that
14 wishes to testify? You may unmute yourself,
15 you can raise your hand, or you can put your
16 name in the chat.

17 Is there anyone else that would like to
18 testify today?

19 (No response).

20 MS. AHMED: Okay. I do not see anyone
21 who has noted that they would like to
22 testify. I will remain unmute, and we will
23 keep the hearing open till 11:30, in case
24 anyone else wishes to join and wants to
25 provide their testimony. Again, we will keep

1 the record open up until 11:30, in case
2 anyone joins the call and would like to
3 testify.

4 (Whereupon, there was a brief
5 pause in the proceedings.)

6 MS. AHMED: Okay. Has anyone joined
7 the call that would like to testify? It's
8 11:12 right now. We'll keep the record open
9 until 11:30, in case anyone joins and wishes
10 to testify.

11 (Whereupon, there was a brief
12 pause in the proceedings.)

13 MS. AHMED: Okay. Again, if anyone
14 wishes to testify, you can do so by unmuting
15 yourself or putting your name in the chat or
16 raising your hand. And seeing that no one is
17 testifying right now or we don't have any
18 participants at this point who would like to
19 testify, I'm going to keep the record open
20 until 11:30. I will be on mute.

21 (Whereupon, there was a brief
22 pause in the proceedings.)

23 MS. AHMED: Hello. Good morning.
24 Thank you for joining. We are keeping the
25 record open in case anyone wishes to join.

1 Anyone who has joined and would like to
2 provide testimony, we are keeping the record
3 open until 11:30, in case anyone joins and
4 wants to provide testimony.

5 (Whereupon, there was a brief
6 pause in the proceedings.)

7 MS. AHMED: Okay, everyone. It's
8 11:20. If anyone has joined the call and
9 would like to testify, you may do so. You
10 can raise your hand, put your name in the
11 chat, or unmute yourself. Again, it's 11:20,
12 and as stated earlier, we'll keep the record
13 open until 11:30, in case someone wants to
14 join and provide testimony. Thank you.

15 (Whereupon, there was a brief
16 pause in the proceedings.)

17 MS. AHMED: Okay. Hello, everyone.
18 Hello, everyone, again. It's 11:25. Again,
19 has anyone joined the call that would like to
20 testify? If you would like to testify, you
21 can unmute yourself, you can put your name in
22 the chat, or you can raise your hand and
23 provide your testimony. Again, it's 11:25.
24 This is the CAPA hearing. Again, we will
25 keep the record open until 11:30, in case

1 someone joins and would like to provide their
2 testimony. As a reminder, you can also
3 submit written comments. You can do so by
4 5:00 p.m. today.

5 (Whereupon, there was a brief
6 pause in the proceedings.)

7 MS. AHMED: Okay, everyone. The time
8 is 11:30.

9 Has anyone joined the call that would
10 like to testify? You can unmute yourself,
11 raise your hand, or put your name in the
12 chat, in case you would like to testify.

13 Is there anyone on the call that would
14 like to testify at this time?

15 (No response).

16 MS. AHMED: Seeing that there is no one
17 on this call that would like to testify, we
18 will conclude today's public hearing. The
19 time is 11:30. This hearing is concluded.
20 Thank you very much for joining. You may
21 submit your written comments at 5:00 p.m.
22 Again, today is the last day to submit your
23 written comments.

24 Thank you very much for joining.

25 (TIME NOTED: 11:29 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF NEW YORK)

:SS

COUNTY OF QUEENS)

I, Sabrina Brown Stewart, a Notary Public within and for the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the witness whose examination is hereinbefore set forth was duly sworn and that such an examination is a true record of the testimony given by such a witness.

I further certify that I am not related to any of these parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am not in any way interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand on this 29th day of November, 2024.

Sabrina Brown Stewart
Sabrina Brown Stewart