



A Call to Action for the Survival of Small Businesses in New York

“Small businesses are the heart and soul of our communities and the backbone of our economy.”

This assessment is universally embraced by public officials, economists and ordinary New Yorkers, and it reflects a rare consensus in public life. Unfortunately, the storefront entrepreneurs – retailers, personal service providers, restaurants – that make New York City thrive are facing unprecedented challenges and the genuine threat of extinction. This was true before the pandemic, when businesses were operating on thin margins due to online competition, unfunded government mandates, and bureaucratic red tape, but the COVID-19 crisis has left small businesses grappling with health concerns, operational challenges, and social unrest in their beloved neighborhoods, all of which make recovery seem like an impossible dream. Now is the time for targeted, innovative assistance and real, fundamental change.

The NYC BID Association represents over 93,000 businesses in 76 neighborhoods across all five boroughs. Our members have been “on the ground” throughout the pandemic, observing how relief measures, despite good intentions, are insufficient and that without further action, thousands of establishments will go out of business, causing their employees to rely on unemployment for survival. Genuine economic hardships have gutted established businesses and have been particularly devastating to the minority, women and immigrant entrepreneurs whose neighborhoods have been especially hard hit. Unless a new approach is taken immediately, many more small businesses will succumb to these historic challenges, and New York’s recovery will be in real jeopardy.

We propose that New York government take the following steps to enable small businesses to come back to life and bring the City’s economy along with them:

1. While different agencies report to different Deputy Mayors, the Mayor should **appoint one senior official in City Hall to oversee and coordinate an all-agency approach to business recovery**. This individual should engage and direct the Department of Small Business Services, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Consumer Affairs, Health and Mental Health, Buildings, Fire, City Planning, and the NYPD, among others on issues impacting business recovery. All agencies need to get on the same page and follow-through.
2. With little to no income right now, small businesses’ biggest concern is paying rent. Our local, state and federal elected officials must work together to find a way to **bring rent and mortgage relief to our commercial corridors**. We especially need a plan for rent relief for businesses to avoid a storefront vacancy crisis, which will be detrimental to our neighborhoods and the City’s economy. Public funds, mediation, eviction moratoria, rent and tax relief should all be considered immediately to extinguish the ticking time bomb in our recovery effort.
3. The City should **expand the innovations of the Open Restaurants Program to other storefront establishments and retail sectors** by providing reasonable guidelines and rules, then requiring individual businesses to follow those rules with minimal bureaucratic interference. This program would revive neighborhood commercial corridors by permitting brick and mortar businesses to place temporary signage, non-permanent queuing stations, small rain canopies, seating and the like on adjacent sidewalks during business hours. The City should provide

specific criteria, waive all permitting fees and ensure that compliance does not require costly investments such as expensive temporary barriers.

4. The City should **maintain existing siting criteria for mobile vendors and enforce current regulations**. Currently, there is no agency enforcing for food or general vendor activities, despite the legal authority to do so. The sidewalks are crowded and pedestrians are at risk, as are brick and mortar businesses trying to avoid bankruptcy and eviction. Bars and restaurants are being closely monitored to ensure compliance with new laws and all vendors should be as well. The City should consider establishing a protocol where conflicts can be resolved between brick and mortar businesses and vendors, and to protect pedestrian safety.
5. New York State should **streamline the State Liquor Authority process** to support entrepreneurs who are willing to make new investments and allow businesses in NYC to operate on temporary licenses as they are permitted to do elsewhere in the State. Process the backlog of existing applications for businesses that had been waiting to open and may be still willing to do so.
6. New York State should **activate sales tax exemptions** to spur consumer interest similar to those previously employed for clothing in the back to school season.
7. The City should support non-profit organizations working to **create markets and pop-up venues** in parks and city spaces by easing SAPO, FCRC and other rules or by expanding the use of existing, successful programs such as Weekend Walks.
8. New York City should **make patrons responsible for their own actions, not the business owner**. As long as the owner has set up shop in accordance with the rules, enforcement by police and others should be focused on individuals who violate those rules.
9. New York State and City should **continually review and revise outdated and burdensome rules and laws**. We believe that the City and State owe it to small businesses and to our communities to ask of each regulation: is this rule necessary to keep our communities safe both right now and, eventually, in the long term?

Small business cannot remain the backbone of New York City's economy unless government does its part to support their recovery. Let's act quickly and strategically to get businesses back up and running so we can rebuild our economy and save our communities. We look forward to your partnership.

The New York City BID Association

<i>161st Street BID</i>	<i>Belmont BID</i>	<i>Livingston-Schermerhorn</i>	<i>Flatiron/23rd Street</i>
<i>165th Street Mall BID</i>	<i>Brighton Beach BID</i>	<i>BIDs)</i>	<i>Partnership</i>
<i>180th Street BID</i>	<i>Bryant Park Corporation</i>	<i>Downtown Flushing Transit</i>	<i>Fordham Road BID</i>
<i>34th Street Partnership</i>	<i>Chinatown Partnership</i>	<i>Hub</i>	<i>Forest Avenue BID</i>
<i>82nd Street Partnership</i>	<i>Church Avenue BID</i>	<i>DUMBO Improvement</i>	<i>Garment District Alliance</i>
<i>86th Street Bay Ridge BID</i>	<i>Columbus Avenue BID</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Gateway JFK BID</i>
<i>Alliance for Downtown</i>	<i>Columbus/Amsterdam BID</i>	<i>East Brooklyn BID</i>	<i>Graham Avenue BID</i>
<i>New York</i>	<i>Diamond District</i>	<i>East Midtown Partnership</i>	<i>Grand Central Partnership</i>
<i>Atlantic Avenue BID</i>	<i>Partnership</i>	<i>FAB Alliance</i>	<i>Grand Street BID</i>
<i>Bay Ridge 5th Avenue BID</i>	<i>Downtown Brooklyn</i>	<i>Fifth Avenue Association</i>	<i>Hudson Square Connection</i>
<i>Bayside Village BID</i>	<i>Partnership (Metrotech,</i>	<i>Flatbush Avenue BID</i>	<i>Hudson Yards/Hell's</i>
<i>Bed-Stuy Gateway BID</i>	<i>Fulton Mall, Court-</i>	<i>Flatbush Junction BID</i>	<i>Kitchen Alliance</i>

Jamaica Center
Jerome Gun Hill BID
Kings Highway BID
Kingsbridge BID
Long Island City BID
Lincoln Square BID
Lower East Side BID
Madison Avenue BID
Meatpacking BID

Montague Street BID
Myrtle Avenue BID
(Brooklyn)
Myrtle Avenue (Queens)
New Dorp BID
NoHo BID
North Flatbush BID
Park Slope 5th Avenue BID
Pitkin Avenue BID

SoHo Broadway Initiative
South Shore BID
Southern Boulevard BID
Steinway Street BID
Sunnyside Shines
Sunset Park BID
Sutphin Boulevard BID
Third Avenue BID
Throggs Neck BID

Times Square Alliance
Union Square Partnership
Village Alliance
Washington Heights BID
West Shore Industrial
District
Westchester Square BID
White Plains Road BID
Woodhaven BID

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

The Bronx Chamber of Commerce

The Manhattan Chamber of Commerce

The Queens Chamber of Commerce

The Staten Island Chamber of Commerce

The New York Building Congress

The New York City Hospitality Alliance

The New York State Restaurant Association

The National Restaurant Association

The National Supermarket Association

The New York State Latino Restaurant, Bar, and Lounge Association