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New city permit process gave Elmhurst restaurant early start



Photo by Rebecca Henely

Mayor Michael Bloomberg (r.) joins City Council Speaker Christine Quinn (l.) to announce that Tacos Tulcingo, owned by Modesto Ramirez (c.), is the 500th restaurant to open under the city's streamlined permitting process.

By Rebecca Henely

TimesLedger Newspapers

Mayor Michael Bloomberg visited a new Elmhurst restaurant, Tacos Tulcingo, Tuesday to announce the success of the city's New Business Acceleration Team, which has allowed restaurants to open 72 days earlier than before.

"Every day they're waiting to open a business ... is a day they're not making money," Bloomberg said.

The team, known as NBAT, was created in March 2010 and streamlines the permitting process for restaurants opening in New York City. Through the program, a restaurant is assigned a case manager who works with the business to coordinate the numerous inspections with agencies, such as the FDNY and city Departments of Health and Buildings.

Bloomberg said the creation of the team has not required new inspectors but has allowed the city to better use the inspectors it has to the benefit of the restaurateurs.

“The city is trying to treat the people who want to open restaurants as customers,” the mayor said.

Tacos Tulcingo was the 500th restaurant to open with the help of the team. Owned by Mexican immigrant Modesto Ramirez, the restaurant is at 40-12 83rd St. and employs 17 people. Through the team, Ramirez was able to get permits and get an issue with Con Edison resolved before its November opening, Bloomberg said.

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn (D-Manhattan) said the creation of the team was spurred by a conversation with a restaurant owner in Greenwich Village. The owner said he had waited three to four months for his final inspection and lost much money in rent during that time. He asked for the city to make scheduling the inspections for the multiple permits easier.

“I said, ‘That seems like a reasonable request,’” Quinn said.

The speaker said the restaurateur took his request to the mayor’s office.

“We in the government are actually here to help support them and make their lives easier,” Quinn said.

She said the city is planning to expand the program to help retail establishments.

Bloomberg said the team has helped open 546 restaurants and created 6,012 jobs. The mayor said total employment in the restaurant industry has been going up, and there are about 20,000 to 25,000 restaurants operating in the five boroughs.

Andrew Rigie, of the New York State Restaurant Association, praised the new team and said restaurants are vital not only to the city’s economy, but also the social landscape of New York.

“It can be a difficult life,” Rigie said of the restaurant worker, “and that’s why we need hardworking and passionate people from all around the world to work in this industry.”

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