



The City of New York
BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD #1

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Serving and Representing: Port Morris, Mott Haven and Melrose



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Economic Development, Land Use, Housing & Zoning Committee Minutes

April 1st, 2025

Paola Martinez, Committee Chairperson

DRAFT

Introductions and Meeting Overview

- Committee Chair Paola Martinez welcomes everyone to the Economic Development, Land Use, Housing and Zoning Committee meeting.
- Committee Chair Paola Martinez introduces herself and other committee members: Susan Camerata (Vice Chair), Freddie Perez, Audrey Ortiz, Michael Pimentel, Diana Leonard, Steven Palmers, and Benjamin Engel.
- District Manager Anthony Jordan reminds attendees that the meeting is being recorded and live-streamed on social media outlets.
- Committee Chair Paola Martinez introduces Benjamin Engel, Program Manager of Commercial District Revitalization Programs, to present on the Third Avenue BID and its efforts for revitalizing the area.

Presentation on Third Avenue BID and CDNA

- Benjamin Engel explains the purpose of the CDNA (Commercial District Needs Assessment) to promote local businesses, improve public spaces, and build community.
- The Third Avenue BID is funded by Avenue NYC, a commercial revitalization grant, to carry out programs in low and moderate-income communities.
- Benjamin Engel outlines the goals of the CDNA: identifying potential partners, conducting a business inventory, surveying consumers and merchants, and presenting findings to groups like this committee.
- The presentation includes neighborhood contacts, key takeaways, business inventory, storefront observation, streetscape, merchant survey responses, strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

Historical Context and Demographics

- Benjamin Engel provides a historical overview of Third Avenue, highlighting its development from the 1850s and its status as the oldest commercial corridor in the Bronx.
- The study area includes Third Avenue, 149th Street, Melrose, and Willis, with a population of 28,000, 65% Hispanic, 30% Black, and a median income of \$26,000.
- Michael Pimentel inquires about the historical boundaries of the BID, and Benjamin Engel confirms they have remained the same since 1990.
- The discussion includes the potential expansion of the BID boundaries and the historical demographics of the area, including German, Irish, Italian, and Polish influences.

Storefront Observations and Survey Findings

- Benjamin Engel presents findings from the business inventory, noting that vacant storefronts are the majority, with a 17% vacancy rate in the hub and 8% in the Bronx total.
- The quality of storefronts is assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, with occupied stores averaging 3 and vacant stores averaging 1.5.
- The survey of 124 businesses reveals that safety, sanitation, and landscaping are the top three changes business owners want to see, while marketing, access to financing, and lease support are the top three resources needed.
- Consumer surveys at various locations highlight safety and sanitation as the top issues, with community events and healthy food options being desired changes.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Benjamin Engel outlines the challenges faced by the area, including crime, safety, sanitation, and the sense of desertion after dark.
- The outdated and unattractive frontages of many storefronts are identified as a significant issue, along with the lack of open space and pedestrian-friendly areas.
- Opportunities for improvement include furthering the work of the opioid collective, organizing community cleanups, activating vacant storefronts, and expanding pedestrian space.
- The discussion includes the potential for a tech maker space, outdoor seating areas, healthy food options, and cooperative ownership as ways to enhance the area.

Coordination and Resources

- Committee Chair Paola Martinez and District Manager Anthony Jordan discuss the need for better coordination and resources to implement the ideas presented.
- The committee members express interest in working with the BID and other stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities identified.
- The importance of involving property owners and business owners in the discussions and decision-making processes is emphasized.

- The need for increased sanitation services and better management of street vendors is highlighted as a critical issue.

Community Engagement and Future Plans

- The committee members discuss the potential for convening meetings with stakeholders to address the issues and develop solutions.
- The role of the BID in supporting small businesses and providing resources is reiterated.
- The importance of maintaining the historical character of the area while promoting economic development is emphasized.
- The discussion includes plans for future meetings and presentations to continue the dialogue and build on the ideas presented.

Action Items

- Convene a meeting with stakeholders, including the community board and the Third Avenue BID, to further discuss the findings of the CDNA and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Follow up with the Third Avenue BID on the possibility of advocating for a reduction in the number of drug clinics in the area.
- Explore opportunities for the Third Avenue BID to connect local businesses with youth employment initiatives and job fairs.
- Investigate the historical vacancy rates in the area prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Discuss the Third Avenue BID's role in supporting businesses affected by the recent fire incident, even if they were outside the BID's boundaries.