



May 15, 2026

Andrea Gordillo  
Board Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 3  
59 East 4th St.  
New York, NY 10003

Dear Chairperson Gordillo,

Thank you for sharing Community Board 3's (CB3) March 26, 2026 resolution, regarding the Board's recommendations for Essex Market. New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) values our longstanding partnership with CB3 and appreciates your continued engagement to ensure Essex Market remains a vibrant community asset serving the Lower East Side and Chinatown neighborhoods.

NYCEDC has managed and sponsored Essex Market since 1993. As the flagship market in NYCEDC's public markets portfolio, Essex Market is home to 38 small, independent, owner-operated businesses across more than 37,000 square feet. We recognize and share CB3's commitment to ensuring the Market continues to provide access to affordable, high-quality food while supporting immigrant entrepreneurs and local small businesses.

Below, we respond to the requests and recommendations outlined in the March resolution:

**1. Community Partner Funding**

CB3's resolution requests that NYCEDC commit to maintaining no less than the current fiscal year level of funding for the Lower East Side Partnership (LESP) to provide community benefit services at Essex Market. NYCEDC agrees that the LESP has delivered meaningful community benefits and programming since the Market opened in its new facility in 2019. NYCEDC has consistently provided significant funding to support community programming, partnerships, and operational supports at Essex Market, and LESP's role in the Market has been foundational to this work.

At the same time, it is essential that NYCEDC make funding decisions through an open and transparent process. Consistent with legal guidance and NYCEDC's procurement requirements, NYCEDC will conduct an open procurement process to select a Community Partner for Essex Market through a Request for Proposals (RFP). This process is necessary as the current Community Partner contract expires in June 2026, and the existing Community Partner is encouraged to participate. As discussed previously, NYCEDC acknowledges CB3's interest and concern regarding the importance of local expertise and the right Community Partner for Essex Market, and welcomes CB3's input regarding priorities and considerations that should be reflected in the forthcoming RFP.

Further, NYCEDC has offered a 6 month contract extension to LESP (now expiring December 31, 2026) and is in ongoing conversations with them to address their concerns and interests related to this process.



## 2. Vision, Long-Term Strategy, and Community Alignment

The resolution recommends that the Market's mission and strategic direction be determined through a community-based visioning process facilitated by a third-party consultant and funded by resources otherwise allocated to private events. NYCEDC shares the underlying goal of ensuring alignment around a shared vision and long-term objectives for Essex Market.

Community input has been central to the Market's development from the outset. During planning and construction, the Essex Crossing Task Force played a meaningful role in shaping architectural design, sustainability initiatives, retail strategy, programming, partnerships, and public space planning. Today's operational framework reflects this foundation, with ongoing adjustments made in response to tenant feedback and evolving needs.

While NYCEDC is not in a position to discontinue private events or redirect those funds to support an external consultant, this does not lessen our commitment to community alignment. Private events are a critical component of the Market's operating model, generating revenue that supports programming, maintenance, and daily operations that benefit both vendors and visitors.

At the same time, NYCEDC agrees there is real value in deepening dialogue around shared goals and priorities. We support leveraging the Essex Crossing Task Force, a long-standing and effective forum for stakeholder engagement, to convene a series of focused discussions aimed at refining the Market's vision, mission, and strategic direction. Incorporating NYCEDC, CB3, LESP, local elected officials and representatives of Market vendors, this approach builds on an established structure for collaboration while ensuring continued, transparent engagement.

NYCEDC is committed to participating actively in this process and believes it offers a practical and inclusive path toward strengthening alignment and sustaining a strong partnership with the community. NYCEDC will coordinate with CB3 on timing and agendas for upcoming Task Force meetings.

## 3. Physical Layout Modifications and Operational Changes

The resolution requests that NYCEDC pause modification to the Market's physical layout until a strategic plan is adopted. While we understand the intent, NYCEDC must ensure the Market operates safely, cleanly, and effectively each day. This responsibility requires the flexibility to make timely physical and operational adjustments in response to safety considerations, customer experience, and tenant needs.

At the same time, we recognize the importance of transparency and meaningful engagement around changes that affect the Market environment. As part of the stakeholder engagement approach outlined above, NYCEDC is committed to working through the Task Force to establish clearer expectations for how and when community input is sought on more significant changes. This approach allows us to strengthen communication and collaboration while continuing to meet our operational responsibilities.

NYCEDC appreciates your continued advocacy for the Market and shares the goal of sustaining a community focused public space that supports vendors, residents and visitors alike. We are



committed to maintaining an environment that is clean, safe, welcoming and respectful. We look forward to continued engagement through the Essex Crossing Task Force to align on goals, clarify roles and processes, and strengthen collaboration. Through this approach, we aim to support both Essex Market's long-term vision and its daily operational needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bernice Clark".

Bernice Clark  
Executive Vice President, External Affairs, NYCEDC

CC: Tim Laughlin, President, Lower East Side Partnership  
Susan Stetzer, District Manager, Manhattan Community Board 3



May 15, 2026

Andrea Gordillo  
Board Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 3  
59 East 4th St.  
New York, NY 10003

Dear Chairperson Gordillo,

Thank you for your letter dated January 28th, 2026 detailing your requests regarding Essex Crossing Site 2 and Essex Market management. New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) values the long-time partnership with Community Board 3 and deeply appreciates your continued efforts to ensure Essex Crossing's success as a community asset.

Regarding your first request to rescind approval of Site 2, the former Market Line space to Burlington Coat Factory, NYCEDC was transparent with the challenges of this site at the Community Board 3 Land Use Committee meeting on October 21, 2025. A representative from Prusik Group, the lead on retail for L+M Development, was also in attendance. The inclusion of the Market Line in Site 2 was part of the original Essex Crossing concept. It was widely reported that the Market Line struggled with foot traffic despite significant and documented efforts from the L+M Development team to recruit new vendors, host events, and increase marketing presence. The Market Line continued to operate at a loss through the COVID-19 pandemic despite the challenges. These challenges were repeatedly shared and discussed in the quarterly Essex Crossing Taskforce meetings, which include overlapping elected official offices, Community Board 3, and the Lower East Side Partnership (LESP).

The Market Line closed in April 2024, and the space has remained vacant. Despite extensive efforts to recruit diverse users by the developer, Burlington was the only prospective tenant who was willing to lease the space. Furthermore, the Market Line space in Site 2 is a condo owned by L+M Development. Under our current agreement, following the failure of the Market Line, NYCEDC and the City of New York cannot unreasonably prevent the developer from leasing the vacant Market Line space to a prospective tenant. It is important to note that City approval for L+M Development to move forward with Burlington Coat Factory as a future tenant of Site 2 was not issued at the time of the October CB 3 Land Use Committee meeting as stated in your letter but rather was issued following the discussion with the committee.

Your second request concerns revisiting the future management and operations of Essex Market. During the pre-development and construction of the new Essex Market, a Community Task Force served in an advisory capacity, providing input on architectural design, sustainability measures, retail strategy and lease-up, proposed programming, development and operating partnerships, as well as community and public space development and programming.

The current operational structure of the market reflects this foundational input, with targeted adjustments implemented over the past several years to enhance customer service and improve safety for tenants, informed by ongoing tenant feedback. Under the existing framework, NYCEDC manages tenanting and facility operations at Essex Market as of July 1, 2025. The community partner is responsible for coordinating programming for the shared kitchen and mezzanine, overseeing



market branding and wayfinding signage, and providing support to the small businesses operating within the market. As part of the long-term partnership with LESP, the community partner also participates in the selection process for new market tenants.

NYCEDC remains open to engaging in a meaningful dialogue with Community Board 3 to better understand its vision.

The third and final request is to postpone the issuance of any RFP by NYCEDC related to Essex Market to allow for community input. NYCEDC shares Community Board 3's view that the LESP has delivered meaningful community benefits to Essex Market. Since the opening of Essex Market in May 2019, LESP has received significant funding from NYCEDC to support community programming and related partnerships. To date, this funding has been sole-sourced by NYCEDC.

It is important to NYCEDC that funding decisions are made through an open and transparent process. Accordingly, and consistent with guidance from our legal department and NYCEDC's procurement requirements, NYCEDC will conduct an open procurement process to select a Community Partner for Essex Market through a Request for Proposals. This process is necessary as the current Community Partner contract expires in June 2026, and the existing Community Partner is encouraged to participate. Further, NYCEDC has offered a 6 month contract extension to LESP (now expiring December 31, 2026) and is in ongoing conversations with them to address their concerns and interests related to this process.

As discussed during the Community Board 3 Land Use Committee meeting held on December 9, 2025, NYCEDC welcomes Community Board 3's input regarding items it recommends be included in the forthcoming RFP. NYCEDC is open to receiving a list of priorities and considerations identified by the community.

NYCEDC has managed and sponsored Essex Market since 1993. As the flagship market in NYCEDC's public markets portfolio, Essex Market is home to 38 small, independent, owner-operated businesses across more than 37,000 square feet. While managing a space of this scale presents inherent challenges, NYCEDC remains committed to ensuring that market operations support vendor success while honoring the rich history and character of the Lower East Side and surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Bernice Clark'.

Bernice Clark  
Executive Vice President, External Affairs, NYCEDC