

January 23, 2024

Statement of the Atlantic Avenue Business Improvement District - City of Yes for Economic Development

Daniel Garodnick, Chair  
NYC Department of City Planning  
120 Broadway, 31st floor  
New York, NY 10271

Chair Garodnick and Commissioners:

We thank the Department of City Planning's (DCP) staff for their dedicated outreach to our organization to understand the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity's effects on Atlantic Avenue.

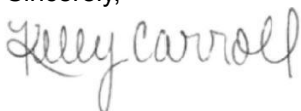
Our BID is majorly composed of the Atlantic Avenue subdistrict, which is within the Downtown Brooklyn Special Zoning District. This Special Subdistrict, along with the presence of four designated New York City Historic Districts, is why Atlantic Avenue is an aesthetically distinct commercial corridor. As such, we are satisfied that the proposed text amendment will not supersede our Special District provisions, and that the particular rules for Atlantic Avenue will remain so that our look and feel as a local and regional destination will be preserved.

We welcome the text amendment that will eliminate hindrances for storefronts in Historic Districts. Currently, storefronts located in a Residence District that are also in a Historic District cannot be re-occupied with commercial use if they are vacant for more than two years. This proposal eliminates this arbitrary two-year deadline, and allows our vacant storefronts to reopen. Commercial activity on Atlantic Avenue dates to the early 1840s, and our side streets historically had storefronts as well. This change will legalize some of our dearest legacy businesses such as Montero Bar, Long Island Bar, the Brooklyn Heights Deli, and nearly all of our side street businesses between Hicks and Clinton Streets.

We also support allowing new corner stores in residential areas. Corner stores characterize our district and adjacent neighborhoods, and currently no new stores can open in Residential areas. The current proposal would allow new stores of 2500 square feet or less to open within one hundred feet of an intersection. This creates new places for small businesses to open, and will enhance public safety by having additional lighting on or near corners of blocks.

Finally, Atlantic Avenue serves our neighbors in Gowanus Houses, who come to shop and dine. This proposal introduces commercial uses on NYCHA campuses for the first time. Considering the fact that NYCHA residents have been isolated and marginalized from the commercial conveniences of city life for decades, development of NYCHA green space for the benefit of an outside commercial space should be strictly and deeply tied to the benefit of the NYCHA residents. Examples of this include entrepreneurship opportunities for residents and special lease access and terms for residents. Unless this is an opportunity for NYCHA residents to be empowered by the commercial rezoning, we do not support it. We understand that DCP regulates the use, not the tenant, but as proposed the text is too vague. Without explicit provisions for NYCHA, the development of NYCHA green space does not benefit the local NYCHA community enough to merit it.

Sincerely,



Kelly Carroll  
Executive Director