



October 12, 2023

Commissioner Dan Garodnick  
City Planning Commission Chair and Department of City Planning Director  
New York City Department of City Planning  
120 Broadway, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10271

Re: City of Yes for Economic Opportunity

Dear Commissioner Garodnick,

On behalf of Union Square Partnership (USP), we are writing to express our unified support for the approval and adoption of the Department of City Planning's City of Yes for Economic Opportunity text amendment to the New York City Zoning Resolution. The amendment encompasses 19 proposed policy changes aimed at modernizing zoning regulations by eliminating outdated mandates and allowing for increased flexibility to support small businesses, create thriving commercial corridors, and bolster New York City's economic recovery.

As the leading advocate for the Union Square-14th Street community, USP is committed to the future growth of our district. It is our mission to strategically plan, fundraise, and advocate for our neighborhood's economic prosperity, and the success of small businesses is essential to Union Square's interconnected ecosystem of dynamic public realm, office space, retail and dining, and overall inclusive community. City of Yes for Economic Opportunity will directly benefit our district by providing necessary flexibility and clarity for property owners, businesses, and innovation industries to invest and grow in Union Square, ultimately improving the health of our neighborhood—just like it will for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across New York City.

City of Yes for Economic Opportunity is designed to remove outdated limitations on businesses and ensure that local retail streets and commercial centers across the city can remain lively places that sustain our neighborhoods. As one of New York City's most vibrant mixed-use districts—a core live-work-learn-play hub within the city—Union Square has long been a neighborhood where small business owners and entrepreneurs get started. Updating our zoning codes to adapt to New York City's changing economy will allow business owners to more quickly fill vacant storefronts and offices with both traditional and innovative uses, encouraging commercial tenants to creatively expand business, lease new space, and make building modifications and installations with clarity and confidence.

Critically, this amendment will attract new investment and industry to our district by providing the Department of Buildings with updated, clear guidance—meaning builders will get answers more quickly and, in turn, get businesses operational faster. Activated storefronts and diversity in ground floor offerings will lead to more vibrant street life that revitalizes our neighborhoods and anchors business district recovery. This kind of energy leads to expanded foot traffic, motivated tourism, and a livelier public realm overall that supports businesses, increases public safety, and improves quality of life.

On behalf of Union Square Partnership, we strongly encourage full support of this initiative, and applaud the Department of City Planning for taking important steps towards supporting business growth, innovation in the private sector, and economic opportunity for New Yorkers. We look forward to working with City Planning to bring the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity to life in Union Square.

Sincerely,



Julie Stein  
Executive Director, Union Square Partnership



William Abramson & Jen Hensley  
Co-Chairs, Union Square Partnership Board of Directors