



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

New York City Council Committee on Government Operations

Public Hearing on

Int. No. 732-2015,

A Local Law to amend the New York City Charter in relation to making urban planning professionals available to community boards

**Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson
Manhattan Community Board 1**

**Thursday, April 30, 2015 at 1:00 p.m.
250 Broadway – Committee Rm., 14th Fl.**

My name is Catherine McVay Hughes, and I represent Community District 1 in Lower Manhattan where I am Chair of Community Board 1 (CB1). Our district includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge. Thank you for holding this important hearing today on Introduction 732 and inviting our testimony.

A multitude of planning issues affect Lower Manhattan ranging from the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site, dozens of simultaneous public and private construction projects, recovery and resiliency issues and quality of life matters. Community Board 1 is unique in that we have two part-time dedicated urban planners, one serving as Director of Planning and Land Use and the other as Planning Consultant. In addition, each year we receive an urban planning graduate student through the Fund for the City of New York Community Planning Fellowship Program and this year for the first time we brought on two students through the CUNY Service Corps program partnered with the Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's Office. This team, comprised of our staff and consultant planner as well as our Fellow and interns has been instrumental in working on planning projects and reports that assist in our advocacy as a Community Board.

One of the most crucial components of this work has been demographic analysis. Using these planning resources, we have been able to independently compile data and publish several reports on our district's total population, child population and senior population. Between 2000 and 2010, our district nearly doubled in population and continues to grow rapidly. These studies and reports are invaluable in our advocacy for community facilities and amenities. For example, the data we have compiled on youth population have been contributory to Assemblyman Silver's School Overcrowding Task Force, and allows us to assist and collaborate with other community groups working on this issue.

Other such projects that have been completed range from reports on affordable housing and rent stabilization, mapping of vendor-restricted areas, the inventorying of energy “green” spaces, analysis of lot area within flood zones, reports on open recreation space and an analysis of sidewalk café zoning. Not only are these projects used in the advocacy of various issues such as those affecting quality of life and the public realm, but they are also all posted on our website in an effort for transparency and data-sharing.

Community Boards are the foundation of democratic, community-based planning in New York City and it is imperative that they have the resources that allow them to independently conduct analysis and projects for their own districts. We have found that these resources and capabilities allow us to more effectively work with other government agencies and community organizations, and to better understand and work to serve our district.

Urban planning professionals are a vital asset for Community Boards, and there is a great need for this type of assistance throughout New York City. We are therefore supportive of the concept of Int. 732, but have concerns regarding how it would be funded and implemented, how many Boards would be assigned to each planner, the process in which planners would be assigned to Boards, and oversight.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.