



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City Council
Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises
Public Hearing on Water Street Upgrades Text Amendment
N 160166 ZRM**

**Testimony by Michael E. Levine, Consulting Planner,
Manhattan Community Board 1
250 Broadway
Tuesday, May 17, 2016, 9:30 am**

Good Morning. I am Michael E. Levine, Consulting Planner for Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1). Thank you for the opportunity to comment in the continuing discussion on Water Street Upgrades Text Amendment.

The proposal to allow the infill of existing arcades for retail use and the improvement of existing plazas by certification and authorization along and near Water Street is intended to enhance the pedestrian experience along a street that is characterized by limited ground floor retail and a high concentration of privately owned public spaces (POPS) lacking in amenities.

It also has a major impact on the retail environment and the streetscape of Lower Manhattan. Community Board 1 has already presented its resolution on May 3, 2016 in support of the Water Street Upgrades Text Amendment with recommendations of many provisions. I will focus on a few of them.

CB1 is pleased that City Planning has incorporated a 45 day referral mechanism into the zoning text to require a Community Board review and comment on any request to infill any arcade space within the proposed area. We request that in the referred to the Community Board, the applicant must be made responsible for explaining the specific community offset in plaza upgrades and benefit that will be provided in exchange for the arcade infill.

We reiterate that because building owners/landlords are potentially realizing substantial value as a result of the infill of these public spaces, community needs for facilities serving the Lower Manhattan Community must be considered, such as schools (including pre-kindergarten centers), libraries, senior centers and recreational facilities

We are also concerned that an emphasis should be placed on small, independent retail establishments over chain stores. We are pleased that banks are excluded from fronting on plazas, and that proposed modifications to the text will include a limited Use Group list and prohibit Use Group 5A (hotel rooms). We support CPC's decision to modify the text to expand the requirement for multiple establishments along the longest frontage which will encourage greater variety of uses.

We believe that due consideration for affordability should be taken into account. Therefore in implementing the arcade upgrade program, CB1 believes that creative use can be made of rental policies that offering a portion of rental space at lower-than market rates for non-profit organizations.

Finally, we believe that every effort must be made to make the plazas resilient.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.