



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## My Testimony at the New York City Planning Commission Regarding the Proposed Tech Hub at East 14th Street and Irving Place

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL May 23, 2018

APPLICATIONS C 180201 ZMM, N 180202 ZRM, AND C 180203 ZSM

May 15, 2018

My name is Brad Hoylman and I am the State Senator representing New York's 27th Senate District, which includes the neighborhoods of the East Village, Greenwich Village, Midtown/East Midtown, Clinton/Hell's Kitchen, Chelsea, Columbus Circle, Times Square, Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village, the Lower East Side, and the Upper West Side. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the City Planning Commission (CPC) today regarding the proposed Tech Hub at East 14th Street and Irving Place.

Before I discuss the applications under consideration, I would like to express my disappointment at the hasty manner in which the sole public hearing on the 14th Street Tech Hub was scheduled. The importance of public review and community input on a project of this scale cannot be overstated. Yet, my office, along with other elected officials and the public, only learned of the hearing one day in advance. One day is simply not enough time to adequately notify the public and give the public an opportunity to plan to attend and prepare appropriate testimony. Moreover, this short timeframe is out of compliance with

City rules that require at least ten days' public notice. This is unacceptable, does a grave disservice to our City, and undermines the public review process.

The proposed 14th Street Tech Hub brings with it the potential for great community benefit, particularly as a workforce development center. Anchored by Civic Hall, an organization that works with various stakeholders to advance the public good, this new center will offer technology training programs for local residents and other advantages for the community.

Technology is the fastest growing private sector industry in New York and provides good paying jobs. There is a great need for training opportunities to serve the labor demands of this sector, and with higher than average poverty and unemployment levels, Community Board 3 in particular could benefit enormously from the economic development opportunities such a hub offers. Residents of Community Board 3 have also expressly identified technology training as a specific need in their community. Civic Hall fosters collaboration between local stakeholders, including entrepreneurs, organizers, government officials, and technologists, to solve community problems. It helps civic-minded entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses and offers technology training classes to underserved communities with dedicated and permanent workforce development space. In addition, Civic Hall offers reasonably priced access to work stations, community space, and meeting rooms. With more space as the anchor tenant of the proposed Tech Hub, Civic Hall would be able to serve more people and do more good. Their educational partners are mostly nonprofit organizations that will provide free or low cost digital skills training while their for-profit partners will be required to provide large tuition scholarships. Moreover, the proposed Tech Hub will offer a variety of local entrepreneurs the opportunity to realize their businesses - from tech startups to food and other retail. With workforce development training for 21st century jobs and growing businesses requiring workers, the proposed Tech Hub will link potential hires with employers under the same roof. In addition, community-

based organizations will have a centrally located space to meet and exchange ideas. While there is enormous community benefit, the proposed Tech Hub also carries the potential for undesirable impacts on our community.

As we have seen, time and again, in neighborhoods across our City, when large commercial centers are built, more commercial development follows, housing prices soar, and neighborhood character changes irrevocably. I share community concerns that, despite best intentions, the proposed 14th Street Tech Hub could exacerbate and accelerate inappropriate, out-of-scale development in the area surrounding the site. I support the community and my elected colleagues in calling on this administration to protect against this by committing to sensible zoning changes in the area surrounding the proposed Tech Hub, including height limits along Broadway and University Place, as well as protections for surrounding streets. If such protections are not granted, we will only see more out-of-scale development. To retain the existing zoning with the proposed Tech Hub will make a bad situation worse. New York deserves to preserve its distinct character, and long term residents of neighborhoods deserve to remain in their homes for years to come. The importance of community input cannot be understated. I would like to thank the numerous residents and neighborhood preservationists who have fought tirelessly to protect our neighborhoods, including the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, the East Village Community Coalition, Good Old Lower East Side, the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, and many others. I would also like to thank former Council Member Rosie Mendez for her tireless work on this project to make community voices heard. Thank you for your attention to my testimony and for CPC's commitment to preserving our city's unique neighborhoods