



## MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FIVE

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David M. Siesko, *Chair*

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November 14, 2008

Hon. Amanda Burden  
Chair  
Department of City Planning  
22 Reade Street, Room 2E  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: GARMENT CENTER REZONING AND PROTECTION FOR THEATRE SPACES**

Dear Chair Burden:

At the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of Community Board Five on Thursday, November 13, 2008, the Board passed the following letter by a vote of 28 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining:

We are writing to express our concern about the scope of the discussion relative to the rezoning of the Garment Center that does not include any consideration for the many small theaters and arts organizations which could be forced to relocate as the area gentrifies.

We request that language be included in the revised zoning text that will protect the theaters in the Garment Center, now and in the future. There are numerous important off-Broadway and off-off Broadway theaters in the Garment Center; we are concerned that any rezoning will result in landlords converting theater space to new permitted uses. We believe that safeguards must be incorporated into any new rezoning which will protect these important theaters. In addition, any new zoning should include a bonus for creating new theaters, as presently exists in midtown.

Off and off-off Broadway theaters are small businesses that provide innovative, affordable entertainment and generate millions in tax revenue. They enhance neighborhoods, provide jobs and promote ancillary businesses such as restaurants and parking lots. Particularly in the Garment Center, the theaters have provided an attraction to businesses and people who rarely ventured into this part of town after working hours. A consortium called *30Something Theaters* has begun to do joint marketing of theaters in the West 30's of Manhattan to attract even more consumers to the area. They have produced a brochure with a map of the theaters and related-businesses that makes it easy to locate a wide range of entertainment venues. Theaters as varied as The Zipper, The Barishnikov Arts Center, The Abingdon Theater, The Barrow Group and many others make up the consortium.

As the Garment Center becomes more populated with hotels, residences and other businesses, we don't want to see the theaters displaced, thereby removing one of the elements that attracted those individuals and businesses into the area in the first place. Unless the proposed changes in the zoning text address the issues of the theaters at this stage, it will be even more difficult to affect the changes needed to help them.

Please consider our concerns and include language in the revised zoning text that will protect, preserve and encourage the Garment Center as a hospitable environment for small theatres and arts organizations that provide so much to enrich our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

David Siesko  
Chair