

SoHo Broadway District Management Association, Inc.  
Community Roundtable – October 23, 2025

## **Meeting Minutes**

Pursuant to a written notice via email, website, and social media, members of the public attended an information session (Community Roundtable) organized by the SoHo Broadway District Management Association, Inc. (dba SoHo Broadway Initiative) on Thursday, October 23, 2025 remotely via Zoom at 4:00 p.m.

Executive Director Erin Piscopink welcomed attendees and introduced Field Operations and Engagement Manager Megan Diebboll. Megan shared her screen with a slide show and asked other panelists to introduce themselves: Gabriel Hippolyte, Assistant DA, Office of Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg; Council Member Christopher Marte, with Land Use Director Conor Allerton; Mark Diller, District Manager, Manhattan Community Board 2, with Valerie De La Rosa, Chair; Antonio Whitaker, Director of the Public Affairs Bureau at the NYC Department of Sanitation; and Lieutenant Patryk Kaczmarczyk, NYPD 1st Precinct. A representative from the NYPD 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct was expected but not in attendance.

Megan Diebboll gave an overview of the SoHo Broadway District (Broadway between Houston Street and Canal Street). Megan noted other common street/sidewalk activities that can have an impact on the district include promotional events which are permitted via the Street Activities Permit Office and are outside the scope of this meeting.

Megan gave an overview of street vending:

- Counterfeit sales
  - Completely illegal. NYPD is primary enforcement agency.
- Food vendors
  - Food carts: license/permit from Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department of Sanitation (DSNY) is primary enforcement agency. Vending must follow location rules.
  - Food trucks: license/permit from Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Department of Sanitation (DSNY) is primary enforcement agency. Vending must follow location rules. May not park in active metered spaces (M-F 7 a.m.-10 p.m., Sa 8 a.m.-10 p.m.).
- General vending
  - Selling merchandise e.g. clothing, sunglasses, artwork. Need licenses from Dept. of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP). Vending must follow location rules.
  - Vendors selling artwork or printed matter protected by 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment don't need licenses but must follow location rules.

- Location rules
  - All vendors must be at least 20' from doorways, 10' from crosswalks or subway entrances, no further than 18" from curb. General vendors cannot be above subway grate, and stands must be no larger than 5' high, 3' deep, or 8' long. And food trucks cannot vend while meters in effect or block crosswalks as is often seen in the district.
- Trends in SoHo Broadway district
  - Majority of vendors have permits
  - On average, 30-40 vendors observed per day
  - Friday-Sunday are busiest days in terms of number of vendors present
  - Approximately 70-80% of vendors observed to be in violation at any given time, primarily for operating in prohibited locations
  - Food vendors regularly leave trash bags next to corner baskets which is not allowed
  - \*Counterfeit sales not included in these statistics
- SoHo Broadway Initiative's role
  - Megan conducts 3 daily district walks
  - Megan files 311 reports (at least 3 per vendor per week). 10-15 311 reports filed daily.
  - SoHo Broadway Clean Team who are in district 7 days a week also report vending conditions and issues to staff.
  - Weekly Vending Report submitted to DSNY and other partners.
  - Weekly Counterfeit Sales Report submitted to NYPD.
- Successful Partnerships
  - Daily communication with NYPD
  - Department of Sanitation Vending Reports
  - Counterfeit Sales: tracking locations over time to share with Precincts
  - NYPD now has daily operations on counterfeit sales
  - Department of Sanitation (DSNY) has done 2 District-wide enforcement operations in the last few months
  - Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) & FDNY conducted outreach at SBI's request regarding noise and fire safety concerns related to street vending
  - Precincts combined have issued 55 tickets, highest being \$1,000 for repeat offenders

Council Member Christopher Marte made a statement on the 10/21 Federal enforcement action on Canal Street and condemned it. He stated that his office has been in contact with other City and State elected officials to make sure New Yorkers are protected, given not everyone is a U.S. citizen and the alarm this has caused in the community.

Tracy Jackson, Chief of Staff to Assembly Member Deborah Glick, was recognized and also shared concerns about the Federal action and offered resources to the community.

Erin Piscopink launched the Q&A section of the meeting and noted SBI had requested attendees submit questions in advance and will prioritize questions received. If we have time at the end we will move to additional questions. A number of questions received had similar themes so we tried to condense/combine questions in a way that the same question was not repeated multiple times. SoHo Broadway staff Erin Piscopink and Megan Diebboll, along with Deputy Director Brandon Zwagerman next alternated in reading questions for the panelists:

- Why is Sanitation the enforcement agency for vending?
  - Antonio Whitaker: Over 2 years ago, Mayor Adams signed an executive order creating the Office of Street Vending and assigned enforcement to DSNY, which had previously been with DCWP and prior to that NYPD. The Mayor felt it was an area of responsibility best suited with DSNY so we have been the lead agency for some time, but we partner with NYPD and other agencies.
- Can you explain the new Q Team approach of NYPD and what impact, if any, that has on vending enforcement?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: This is similar to the prior Neighborhood Coordination Officer team (and same officers) with additional training in regard to quality-of-life enforcement. One of the main focus areas in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct is counterfeit vending on and around Canal Street, in particular. The Q Team does daily enforcement on this along with many other quality-of-life issues. Q Team predominantly works 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and are given overtime resources at times. For example, on 10/11, had a module with 8 officers and made 8 arrests on Canal Street. Recovered property from this action is also seized, and we do joint actions with DSNY.
- Counterfeit vendors are openly selling goods that blanket entire sidewalks on Broadway, making it impossible for people to walk down the street. What started as illegal activity on the weekend is now a 7 day per week operation, expanding in all directions & spilling into residential areas. Why hasn't the City and NYPD addressed this given how flagrant it is?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: We do address it and arrest people daily and seize/destroy property. Unfortunately, we see the same people come out the next day with new property for sale and often arrest the same people multiple times. The counterfeit sellers are also often challenging to apprehend given that they often flee against traffic or into train stations. They must be observed making a sale with a transaction and PD need to apprehend the perpetrator and property in order to be a good case to arrest. It can take 2-4 officers to arrest one person and seize their property. It takes a lot of resources. Even if we have additional resources, there can still be hundreds of sellers present far beyond the resources available to arrest all counterfeit sellers. We do the best we can on a daily basis.
  - Gabriel Hippolyte: Another aspect is that a majority of individuals arrested are eligible and required by statute to be given a desk appearance ticket (processing time approximately 6 hours) which is

why you don't see longer detainment time for those individuals. Individuals with certain aspects such as warrants will be in custody longer.

- The sidewalks are extremely busy and the proliferation of vendors makes the sidewalks even more difficult to navigate, with pedestrians sometimes moving into the roadway in order to pass. How is pedestrian safety being taken into consideration when agencies are deciding where and when, or how to prioritize, enforcement?
  - Antonio Whitaker: From DSNY standpoint, we look at 311 data to inform us where we need to focus resources. There are more vendors in certain areas due to more foot traffic/tourists. We also rely on partners in government and nonprofit/private sectors to tell us where they see proliferation of vending. We like to start with an initial assessment, let vendors know if they are unlicensed that we will be back in a few days to enforce laws on books. We let them know we will confiscate items and you will receive summons and voucher for your items. We hope this approach serves as a deterrent. But this is something that is a constant churn for our agency. We can go to a location multiple times and conduct sweeps, but a few days later they typically return. They can recover items from us if they pay fines since it is a civil infraction.
- Are vending licenses designated by zones? Is there a plan to improve the system to assign locations that are acceptable for street vending to ensure that certain neighborhoods or streets are not overwhelmed with vendors and there is thoughtful distribution?
  - Antonio Whitaker: There are currently no specific zones for vending, but there are certain areas of the city, certain streets that are restricted to vending, for both general vending and for mobile food vending as well. DOHMH has a mobile food vendor restriction map and DCWP has an equivalent map that shows you where the areas of the city are restricted to general vending.
- I've witnessed violence and drug sales taking place in the areas with heavy counterfeit sales happening directly in front of NYPD officers and they continue to shrug off the violence and say they do not see anything. Why is this happening?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: Myself and my officers always address the vending issue. We legally have to see items and see people make sales.
  - Gabriel Hippolyte: Some clarity about what trademark counterfeit is: an individual selling or attempting to sell a trademark good. Officers need to see an individual is attempting to make a sale or has possession of items and is trying to engage in sales. Individuals may flee and officers may not be able to recover the property. Property needs to be recovered and have a representative examine it to prove a case has legally sufficient evidence to move forward.

- Related to food truck vending: How can your precincts support efforts to implement stricter enforcement and higher penalties for repeat offenders in this corridor?
  - Antonio Whitaker: We have a sliding scale of summonses. The cheapest we give out is parking violation (\$35). This is often the summons received for parking in crosswalk or actively vending from metered parking spot. For example the Auntie Anne's truck is known to us and has received many parking violations. For unlicensed trucks and carts the summons is significantly more expensive (\$1000 plus fees accrued on daily basis for storage fees until they pay fines). Many of these vendors pick SoHo BID area due to foot traffic, and these summonses can be de minimis in terms of the amount of money they make daily and can be treated as a cost of doing business. Maybe there is a legislative remedy but from DSNY standpoint it is a constant churn for us and they are getting summonsed multiple times.
- There is a business in the district that sells their merchandise on the sidewalk - operating illegally and blocking pedestrian flow. What is being done to address this? (420 Broadway)
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: That business is on the 5th Precinct side. I don't want to speak for them but they may be issued summonses and we ask them to move merchandise inside.
  - Megan Diebboll: 5th Precinct has visited and I visit and educate businesses on what is and isn't allowed. DSNY also visited during walkthrough.
  - Antonio Whitaker: DSNY will visit again.
- A pressing fear I have is if you are openly allowing criminal activity on a major street in NYC, are you encouraging the Federal government to intervene? Have the actions of the Federal government earlier this week altered NYPD's approach to enforcement on Canal Street?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: We don't coordinate with the Feds; we weren't present for the action earlier this week and they don't tell us what they are doing. We have noticed there has been a lot less activity on Canal Street since then, but we will not be changing our approach. We only engage if there is a protest.
- I've noticed food cart vendors leaving bags of trash at the corner baskets on Broadway. Given that DSNY is the enforcement agency for vending and trash more generally, what enforcement is being done on this?
  - Antonio Whitaker: We have spoken to a number of vendors without this and have done a number of walkthroughs educating vendors that they must properly containerize and remove trash although they do not always comply. We summons folks on this regularly and hope it will deter bad behavior. We also look at the vending reports received from the BID as well as one-on-one calls from local elected officials alerting us about vendors who do this, and send our team out to assess and issue summonses.
- It seems that vendors of all types have accepted some enforcement into their cost

of doing business, either through the confiscation of counterfeit goods, parking tickets, or summonses for other types of vendors. Why is the City not taking a zero-tolerance approach?

- Antonio Whitaker: As I mentioned earlier, this is sort of a revolving door for us. Since DSNY only does civil enforcement, nobody would get arrested by us: we only issues summonses and do confiscation. As long as vendor pays fines and applicable fees they are allowed to get confiscated items back (other than food which is composted or donated). It is difficult to manage and enforce but we do our best to stay on top it as much as possible.
- Conor Allerton: When we speak with Precincts and DSNY, they approach things with zero tolerance in the capacity that they can enforce (civil or criminal). It is being addressed to the full extent of the laws we have, but because it is such a large issue with so many people and goods involved, it is difficult to stay ahead of it. I think all of the agencies and our offices are dedicated to solving this problem as best we can. We also want to tackle the issue through legislative solutions that can be developed. I want people to know that there isn't a tolerance of the issue, but we understand the frustration.
- Tracy Jackson: I wanted to ask if there are any opportunities to investigate where the flow of goods is coming from? Is there a capacity for investigating who the distributors and manufacturers of counterfeit goods are?
- Patryk Kaczmarczyk: Specialized NYPD units do these investigations. Locations to get search warrants and goods are confiscated. There are major seizures from time to time. It takes extensive work to get a search warrant and get enough evidence to seize property. Because there is such a high demand for these goods, new locations will be found and they will continue to be sold, however. This is a 30-year problem on Canal Street.
- Gabriel Hippolyte: All of our agencies are working in unison together to try to address this issue. We are alerted of sweeps. We look at every case on a case-by-case basis and look at individual charged and what was recovered to make assessments regarding those individuals. Our office also goes after large-scale search warrants and have had successful prosecutions in those matters, working with NYPD and Federal government. Many of the depots/storage locations are not in Manhattan but closer to ports so have to work outside our jurisdiction, even in New Jersey. Many cases get routed to our counterparts at DSNY, EDNY, and US Attorney's Office for New Jersey. The demand for trademark goods from tourists and others is a key part of the issue driving this behavior.
- Tracy Jackson: Maybe a PSA campaign with office of tourism or flyering in hotels to encourage tourists not to buy could help.
- Conor Allerton: On topic of coordination, because DSNY holds the

goods until a fine is paid and they get released, while it is not DSNY's job to investigate counterfeit, maybe there is an opportunity for NYPD to investigate these goods while they are in custody. Maybe that's another opportunity for coordination to explore. What is DSNY's capacity for enforcement?

- Erin Piscopink: I want to pull apart 2 different things: 1) vending that can be done legally (e.g. food carts, food trucks, general vending) but which is often not, which is where DSNY does enforcement and 2) counterfeit goods sales, which is never legal and NYPD does enforcement.
- Antonio Whitaker: DSNY does not do counterfeit enforcement; when we come across counterfeit goods we contact NYPD. We only do civil rather than criminal enforcement. We have about 40 Sanitation Police officers citywide in our vending unit. We have a team in every borough composed of a Lieutenant and 5-6 officers. They receive daily orders on where to go based on hot spots and one-offs based on tips from community partners and electeds. When we come across an unlicensed truck or food cart and we have to confiscate that, it takes our full day, as we need to take inventory and transport it to facilities in Brooklyn.
- “On any given day, the sidewalks are overtaken by vendors selling fake handbags, counterfeit electronics, drugs, and other illegal goods. This activity not only blocks pedestrian access and creates a sense of disorder, but it also prohibits legitimate retailers from leasing space, reduces foot traffic for lawful businesses, and ultimately diminishes property values and city tax revenue. I have met with several big name retailers that will never consider renting retail space here due to the area's association with counterfeit goods. It is truly sad to see how many storefronts are shuttered for such a prime location in Manhattan. What can I do as a property owner to help the police stop the daily illegal vendors? I am eager to be part of the solution and to support efforts that will make Canal Street a welcoming, vibrant, and law-abiding part of Lower Manhattan once again.”
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: We have a steady stream of enforcement. I encourage people to take photos and videos and send it into us via 911 if applicable or 311. Our biggest concern is pedestrians getting hurt. We want things to be documented and know it is coming from community not just from NYPD. Social media is difficult for us... everything that comes up when you search Canal Street is counterfeit bags. Everyone knows to go to Canal Street to purchase these items; it is free advertisement.
  - Antonio Whitaker: File 311 requests. We look at that data and it informs where to focus our resources. That is the best way for property owners and business owners to help us out.
  - Gabriel Hippolyte: The 311 reports assist the most as they document the location. This is the most effective way to let all parties on this call know these locations. In terms of prosecution we need individual to witness sales and need seizure of the foods.

- City Council recently passed a bill decriminalizing vending. What does that actually mean? Is City Council currently considering any other legislation that would impact vending?
  - Conor Allerton: There is a bill (Intro. 431) that was laid over at Committee but is still active, introduced by Council Member Pierina Sanchez and we are signed on as one of 24 Council Member sponsors. The idea of decriminalizing this vending is a strategy taken with certain illegal behaviors where the more you are able to decriminalize an activity, the more you are able to regulate it. The idea is that if you are able to expand access to permitting for vendors, it becomes a lot easier to track and enforce legality of vending activity. They are then in the system, and the permit could be revoked. They can also not sell goods through legal permits. It becomes easier to regulate a market when you have a better sense of breadth of market. The idea is to decriminalize vending to better manage it, given there is no decrease in demand of goods in this informal economy. The Council's hope that this helps in addition to some of the enforcement we are currently doing, although not a silver bullet.
  - Erin Piscopink: I hope that as Council is considering changing the number of licenses available, that they consider enforcement increases in kind or above that, given we are not currently getting the level of enforcement needed to move the needle on street conditions. I'll add that there is another bill, I believe it is Intro. 24, which changes the regulation of how far from the curb a vendor can be, which would be highly detrimental to the streets, and I believe Council Member Marte is a co-sponsor. We would love to talk more about these concerns offline.
- We've heard from the BID that NYPD is doing daily operations at Canal and Broadway. I've seen the counterfeit vendors flee to avoid getting caught but then return immediately. What can be done to end this cycle?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: We will continue enforcement. In terms of what can keep them from coming back, it seems greater repercussions for these activities could be a solution. We take a zero tolerance approach from what Police are able to do.
  - Gabriel Hippolyte: As soon as you have more NYPD presence, the activity seems to dissipate. As long as we have more officers on the street, which we know is a challenge, is greater deterrent factor. The demand for these products continues so that presence can be a deterrent.
- How many enforcement actions or product seizures related to counterfeit goods occurred in the neighborhood in the past year? How does this compare year-over-year?
  - Patryk Kaczmarczyk: In the 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct (west of Broadway) last year to date there were 100 arrests made in 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct for counterfeit goods. This year to date there have been 300. Over the past month had approximately 20 arrests, with 2-3,000 items seized. On 11<sup>th</sup> we

seized 965 items and made 8 arrests. There has been an increase in arrests and items seized this year because we have also had operations with DSNY and CRT from Manhattan South borough. I know the 5<sup>th</sup> has also done many operations. We typically make 20-30 arrests in 1<sup>st</sup> Precinct monthly but it can vary by month due to weather and other factors.

- o Gabriel Hippolyte: There are timeframes when there are larger operations, and we process what comes into our office which fluctuates day to day and month to month.
- What additional steps can DSNY take to improve weekend enforcement and ensure that only licensed vendors operate in legally sanctioned locations along Broadway?
  - o Antonio Whitaker: We do conduct weekend enforcement citywide. We use 311 data to determine where there is a proliferation of unlicensed vending and where we need to be on the weekend vs. weekday (e.g. SoHo). We also work with local electeds and partners. We try to move folks around to supplement weekend officer needs. We have put in request for this fiscal year for additional funding to beef up our numbers but were denied; will likely make that budgetary request to Council again for additional resources.
- I have seen counterfeit goods being dropped off from vans, know that it is being stored in nearby locations, and it seems that there is an organized crime element to this. Is there anything being done to cut-off the supply further up the chain, ultimately eliminating the illegal street vending activities?
  - o Patryk Kaczmarczyk: We have to observe they are counterfeit goods, and have seized vehicles. We have to watch them remove items and set up. We are often in marked cars and our unmarked cars are known so it is a challenge. Further up the chain we have other units working on this to get to the source.
  - o Gabriel Hippolyte: At the DA's office, we are open to this and working with our partners on these efforts.
- What can the SoHo community do to A) get increased enforcement, B) ensure that enforcement is an effective deterrent and C) truly solve these issues?
  - o Antonio Whitaker: That's a loaded question; I understand the frustration. Someone much smarter than me will eventually have to hunker down and look at the data and see what out-of-the-box solutions we can come up with to tackle the root of the problem. This is an issue that is difficult for us to enforce at the root of the problem. Since it is a civil enforcement, people can get their stuff and come back. We understand the frustration of business owners and the community. We have to do our best and stay on top of it. Additional resources for us will be extremely helpful to hire more sanitation police to do this work and hopefully make a dent. We are out there 5-6 days a week nonstop trying to deal with this.

Erin Piscopink thanked all who participated in the roundtable and gave a special thanks to Megan Diebboll who had over 500 district walks since she started in January. We will send out a recap of this meeting and will include a link to some resources including guidance on how to file 311 complaints, which helps to drive enforcement. Megan Diebboll added her thanks to all panelists and attendees.

The Roundtable adjourned at 5:15 p.m.