September 1, 2015

Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

We represent close to 20 neighborhoods across the city where DOT pedestrian plazas have transformed our streets into vibrant town squares. The plazas we love and care for were pioneered up and down Broadway and in Times Square, but they are now part of the fabric of our neighborhoods and assets for all New Yorkers.

As official plaza managers under contract to DOT, we are uniquely qualified to tell you that the city’s 71 plazas are advancing your agenda for an equitable New York. Every day in our neighborhoods, plazas improve public safety, promote health and wellness, cultivate arts and culture, provide new open space (30 acres so far), and generate economic activity – all central tenets of your admirable vision for New York, OneNYC. Our plazas are centerpieces of neighborhoods where OneNYC can have big impacts:

Brownsville, New Lots, Kensington, Flatbush, Ozone Park, Corona, Jackson Heights, Ridgewood, Flushing, Soundview, South Bronx, East Harlem, and Washington Heights

As you know, pedestrian plazas are locally managed by not-for-profit organizations. Many of those managers are Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Not every neighborhood can have a BID, but every neighborhood can have a plaza. We represent the nearly 20 non-BID not-for-profit organizations managing pedestrian plazas: we are merchants associations, LDCs, youth development groups, all-volunteer civic associations, and immigrant service organizations. We struggle to find resources to maintain and program these spaces, but we persevere because we believe in the long-term quality-of-life, sustainability, and equity benefits they bring to our communities.

The $1.4M you allocated as part of OneNYC for plaza maintenance and technical assistance is a clear indication of your belief in the same benefits we strive to provide. We are grateful for your assistance and for your belief in our plazas.
We are in full agreement with our colleagues in the New York City BID Association that the vendor issues plaguing Times Square are complex but solvable, and that all plazas will flourish under a regulatory framework that recognizes and nurtures the unique contributions they are making to the city. Thank you for convening the multi-agency Task Force and taking seriously the issues we all face. We stand at the ready to provide information and otherwise be helpful as the Task Force deliberates.

Please don't give up on plazas! You have a standing invitation to visit ours – enjoy a pop-up library, a Tibetan dance performance, a health screening, or just sit with a coffee – to see how these modest investments leverage a world of civic engagement and neighborhood pride. Thank you for your efforts to make our city safe, livable, and equitable for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

Laura Hansen
Managing Director
Neighborhood Plaza Partnership, at The Horticultural Society of New York, citywide

with

Association of Community Employment Programs for the Homeless (ACE), citywide
SoBRO, Roberto Clemente Plaza, the Bronx
Youth Ministries for Peace & Justice, Morrison Plaza, the Bronx
Brownsville Community Justice Center, Osborn Plaza, Brooklyn
Kensington Stewards, Avenue C and Kensington Plazas, Brooklyn
New Lots Triangle Merchants Association, New Lots Triangle Plaza, Brooklyn
Parkside Empire - Flatbush Avenue Merchants Association, Parkside Plaza, Brooklyn
Friends of Bogardus Plaza, Manhattan
New Harlem East Merchants Association, East 125th Street Plaza, Manhattan
Washington Heights Inwood Development Corporation,
Plaza de las Americas, Manhattan
Bangladeshi American Community Development & Youth Service (BACDYS),
Ozone Park Plaza, Queens
Friends of Corona Plaza, Queens
Friends of Diversity Plaza, Queens
Jackson Heights Green Alliance, 78th Street Plaza, Queens
Korean American Association of Queens, Roosevelt Avenue Plaza, Queens
Queens Economic Development Corporation, Corona Plaza, Queens
Queens Museum, Corona Plaza, Queens
Ridgewood Local Development Corporation, 71st Avenue Plaza, Queens
The Uni Project, citywide
cc:  First Deputy Mayor Anthony Shorris  
Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen  
Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, DOT  
Commissioner William Bratton, NYPD  
Chair Carl Weisbrod, DCP  
Director Michael Carey, CECM  
Acting Commissioner Andrew Schwartz, SBS