

Speaker Julie Menin
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Email Delivery

Re: MAS Support for City Council Funding of the ReThread Project

Dear Speaker Menin,

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) urges the City Council to support and fund the ReThread Project's proposal to acquire affordable space within the Garment District for fashion industry businesses. As a member of the New York Fashion Workforce Development Coalition, MAS has been an advocate for the garment industry remaining in Midtown Manhattan. We testified on the Midtown South Mixed-Use Plan to ensure that garment industry businesses are supported and remain active in parallel with meeting the goals of bringing housing and vibrancy to the neighborhood.

ReThread is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the fashion and costume industries through education, skills training, and the development of an industry innovation hub. Aptly called Midtown Made, this hub will be a living facet of the garment industry ecosystem as well as a museum commemorating its rich New York City history.

Acquiring an affordable space for this hub will not only honor the industry's past contributions to our city but also help advance the success of its future. Located in proximity to the heart of New York's vibrant theatre, film, and entertainment centers, the hub would help these small businesses continue to serve their customers and facilitate avenues for interdisciplinary collaboration.

ReThread is led by Carisa Kelly, a costume designer and member of United Scenic Artist IATSE Local 829. She leads a dedicated team of experts in fashion, costume, real estate and workforce development, financing, and community engagement.

The fashion and costume industries are major economic drivers for New York City and their decline would dramatically undermine hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout the city. According to the Council of Fashion Designers of America, the fashion industry employs over 180,000 people and generates more than \$11 billion in wages annually in the city. The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees reports that the theatre industry contributes \$14.7 billion annually to New York City's economy, supporting nearly 97,000 local jobs. Film and television generate \$81.6 billion in annual output and employ over 100,000 New Yorkers.

Industry ownership would be effective in both preserving space and creating the stability needed for investment and job growth. This mission-driven ownership strategy is similar to the models of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center, and Theatre Row.

City Council funding would be used for predevelopment costs to develop the financing and management models, negotiate partnership agreements with building owners, and conduct necessary architectural and engineering assessments of the building(s).

This is a unique win-win-win opportunity. The interests of the fashion and costume industries, the building owners, the theatre, movie and other entertainment sectors and the City's priority to create affordable housing, are in alignment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keri Butler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Keri Butler
President, Municipal Art Society of New York

cc.

Council Member Carl Wilson
Council Member Virginia Maloney