

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

**KEITH POWERS**



---

## June 2022 Full Board Report to Manhattan Community Board 6

---

### Highlights

Last month, I proudly joined the St. Vartan Park Conservancy and the Alliance for Kips Bay to announce that the garden at St. Vartan Park will finally be open to the public for the first time in decades. Despite being adjacent to the playground and active space, this space has been gated off to the public. We also announced the launching of a new conservancy for the park to ensure that it remains well-maintained and receives the attention that it deserves. This is all very exciting news for our neighborhood's accessible green spaces, and will bring a breath of fresh air for New Yorkers!

Over the past few years, I have been working alongside the Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenants Association and fellow elected officials to cease construction of two combined heat and power (CHP) plants in Stuyvesant Town. Since the announcement of the CHP plants, thousands of my neighbors have voiced their concerns about the dangerous emissions outside their window, the potential harm to the environment, and the precedent it will set if these are allowed to be built in a residentially zoned community. After many conversations with Beam Living and Blackstone regarding concerns from neighbors about the plants, Blackstone has finally agreed to not move forward with construction. I am grateful to them for listening to our concerns and making a decision based on our feedback. This is a testament to the hard work and continued advocacy of tenants and community organizing.

On Tuesday, I hosted a bike helmet giveaway at Playground 9 in Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village. It was a major success and I was happy to partner with the Department of Transportation to outfit many young children and bicyclists of all ages to ensure bike safety is paramount in the city. I intend to fund more bike helmet giveaway events in the next fiscal year, and we will keep you posted on when and where these are scheduled in the future.

Last month, the Rent Guidelines Board cast a preliminary vote to increase New York rents from 2% to 4% for one-year leases and between 4% and 6% for two-year leases, impacting over 2 million rent-stabilized tenants living across all five boroughs. Working with colleagues in Manhattan and Brooklyn, I authored [a letter](#) to the Rent Guidelines Board last month requesting additional hearings to provide tenants more opportunities to testify on these proposed hikes. In response to our letter, the Rent Guidelines Board listened to us and added two remote hearings so more tenants could testify. This is already a tremendously difficult time in our city, and I am proud to continue standing with tenants who have difficulty absorbing additional costs.

Last week, I joined Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine and City Council colleagues to introduce legislation to boost Manhattan's economic recovery and protect our storefronts. Our new legislation would suspend the Commercial Rent Tax on Manhattan's small businesses. For decades, our neighborhood businesses have been charged an additional 4% tax on their rents for simply being geographically located in Manhattan. This tax has been long considered arbitrary and unfair, but has raised significant revenue for the city budget. As commercial rents have skyrocketed—resulting in too many empty storefronts throughout the East Side—this tax has put our small businesses at a disadvantage relative to their counterparts in other neighborhoods. Our legislation calls on a 3-year suspension of the tax for storefronts as the city experiences a decline in tourism, changes in workplace behavior, and significant downturns in revenue for small businesses. By boosting the money available to small businesses, we can aid and expedite Manhattan's recovery, while hopefully increasing employment.