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Common Council President Tom DePietro,
and the members of Hudson's Common Council
City Hall
520 Warren Street
Hudson, NY 12534

March 21, 2021

Dear President DePietro and members of the Common Council,

As we all continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic, Hudson's businesses, in particular those in the restaurant and hospitality sectors, continue to struggle due to decreased visitorship and economic activity, added debt or liabilities that owners have incurred just to stay afloat, having to operate at reduced capacities, and new or added expenses around hygiene and sanitization, testing and contract tracing, and many other efforts to keep employees, patrons, and indeed, our entire local community, safe.

As you're aware, the Hudson Business Coalition (HBCi) advocates on behalf of Hudson's truly one-of-a-kind community of small and micro businesses, including restaurants, retailers, hospitality businesses, and cultural institutions. Last year's Shared Streets program was an earnest attempt to develop a means by which businesses could safely operate at reduced capacity by allowing them to expand outdoors. We know that restaurants and hospitality businesses have been the economic sector most severely impacted by the pandemic, and some Hudson restaurant owners have indicated that they attribute their ability to stay in business today to last year's program allowing them to set up on the sidewalks and into the street.

We understand that City government lacks a legal mechanism to restrict or slow the flow of motor traffic for extended periods within Hudson. As we understand it, the current plan is for a "Warren Street seasonal use program" operating from spring through fall 2021. This program would allow for businesses, after obtaining the proper permits, to essentially "build out" into parking spaces in front of their locations, and operate within those spaces seven days a week, from the program's launch, ideally in April or May, through October or November, or for as long as weather conditions permit.

We all learned a great amount from last year's Shared Streets program, and the results from the Tourism Board's recent business survey indicate that a sizable contingent of business owners would either like to participate in such a program this year, or at least see it return in some form. That questionnaire found that, at present, at least thirteen different restaurants and dining establishments, and at least sixteen retailers, are interested in obtaining permits to expand into the parking spaces in front of their businesses.

We also know that any program of this scale requires serious, coordinated planning, and so we were heartened to learn that the intention for this year is to hire a program manager who, for the program's duration, would be responsible for planning, budgeting, promotion, coordination, and enforcement. We recognize the leadership displayed by Mayor Johnson on the issue of support for businesses, and the Mayor's office has demonstrated an eagerness to develop a program that's designed to help Hudson's economy recover and prosper. **The Hudson Business Coalition, on behalf of Hudson's businesses, supports the overall spirit and intention of the**



program now being proposed. Furthermore, we support the current resolution before the Council to allocate funding for a program manager responsible for planning, oversight, and implementation of the “Warren Street seasonal use plan.” A vote in favor of this resolution signals a vote in support of Hudson’s small business community at this critical juncture.

If the resolution does not advance, the downside would be tremendous- first, it would signal a lack of support for the program in general, by not allocating the necessary resources to see it succeed. If the program isn't allowed to go forward, we know that many businesses, in particular restaurants and dining establishments, will be pushed into further distress. These businesses contribute significantly to the City’s tax base, employ Hudson residents as workers, contractors, and service providers, and help to ensure money stays within the local economy.

The hiring of a program manager is a crucial first step to supporting the City's overall recovery effort. A critical component of the program manager's role will be to exercise effective enforcement capability while the program is in effect. It's vitally important that this individual be empowered to make sure businesses are complying with any and all regulations, for the safety and quality of life of visitors to Hudson and the City's residents alike. And similarly, that businesses need to be made aware of all regulations they are subject to by participating.

When designing the program, here are some additional considerations that should be taken into account so as to maximize the positive impact it will have on Hudson’s businesses and economy:

Seek a Grant to Cover the Permitting Fees for Businesses

We understand the need to offset the loss in revenue from unutilized parking meters with permitting fees. Those fees last year were graciously covered by a generous donor who was passionate about helping Hudson's small business community. Those responsible for this year’s program should seek a similar arrangement, so as to not saddle Hudson’s businesses with another expense during this crucial period of their recovery.

Provide Businesses with Clear, Concise, and Consistent Guidelines for Participation

Businesses should know exactly what regulations they need to operate under when participating in the program- regarding distancing, noise regulations, the structures and objects they can use in their parking space build-outs, and any additional considerations. The HBCi has an effective communication channel with Hudson’s businesses, and stands ready to assist with the dissemination of such information

The Name Matters

We all know how important clear and accurate language is to effectively communicate the true essence and meaning of any initiative. We also understand that this year's program will differ from last year's, in the sense that traffic won't be slowed or limited to allow for pedestrians to enter into and "share" the streets with motorists. That being the case, it would be improper to refer to it as 'Shared Streets,' and referring to it as such would likely give a false impression that Hudson’s roadways are being "shared," which could endanger the safety and well-being of pedestrians and those participating in the program.

Don't Allow for Businesses from Outside of Hudson to Utilize Parking Spaces

If the intention is to help Hudson's business community recover and thrive, inviting businesses from outside the City to move into the parking spaces that have been allocated for our own undermines that effort. Previous attempts at this have not been effective at increasing economic benefit to the City. With that said, we are also acutely aware that business owners from more marginalized and economically distressed communities have



historically been cut out of the benefits that operating along highly-trafficked and visible corridors like Warren St. have provided. HBCi fully supports and stands ready to help promote and organize events and programs that are designed for these kinds of Hudson-based business owners and activate underutilized spaces within the City, be it at our 'pocket parks' or on other City-owned properties.

For as long as we are experiencing the effects of the pandemic, and conducting business under limited operating capacity due to state and federal health guidelines, local government has a responsibility to do everything it can to effectively support those individuals in the Hudson community who contribute so much to the City's tax base, keep money circulating within the local economy, and donate time and funds to support so many of Hudson's outstanding programs for young people, the economically disadvantaged, and the artistic communities. We appreciate your support and look forward to continued conversation and collaboration.

Very sincerely

Hudson Business Coalition, Inc.,
representing Hudson's business community

cc: Mayor Kamal Johnson; Mayoral Aide Michael Chameides; Chairperson Calvin Lewis and Members of the Hudson Tourism Board