



Hallmark Legislation Will Help Green The City

By City Councilmember James Gennaro

Two years ago, the City Council passed a law I wrote – The NYC Climate Protection Act – to mandate that New York City reduce its greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by 2030.

On December 9, the City Council passed four more bills that will move our city dramatically closer to fulfilling the vision of that landmark law. These new bills constitute the most progressive and comprehensive legislative package ever proposed by an American city to make its existing buildings more energy efficient.

These bills focus on the energy efficiency of buildings because nearly 80 percent of New York City's greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants come from the heating, cooling and powering of the one million buildings across our city. And, I'm focusing on existing buildings because the New York City of 2030 will consist predominantly (approximately 85 percent) of buildings that already exist.

While many cities across the country are making strides to make sure that new building construction conforms to "green" standards, which is certainly important, this legislative package is unique in the country in that it recognizes that we cannot green our cities, lower our energy costs and clean our air with new

construction alone. To create the kind of environment we want for our children and to protect our grandchildren from the effects of disastrous climate change, we need to green our existing buildings.

And, as compelling as the environmental rationale is for this initiative, just as compelling are the economic reasons to proceed. In advancing these measures, New York City will be creating a new green industry that will create 19,000 new jobs over a 10 year period and save New Yorkers more than \$750 million in annual energy costs.

The first bill, which I authored, would require owners of buildings larger than 50,000 square feet or multiple buildings on a single tax lot that on aggregate exceed 100,000 gross square feet to perform an "energy audit" of the building and to implement energy-efficiency improvements that pay for themselves through energy savings within five years. Although this law would only apply to approximately 22,000 buildings, a small fraction of New York City's building stock, these buildings represent almost half of the built square footage in the city and 45 percent of the city's energy consumption.

The second bill will require large building owners to conduct an annual analysis of their building's energy and water consumption, with the goal of reducing energy and water use and

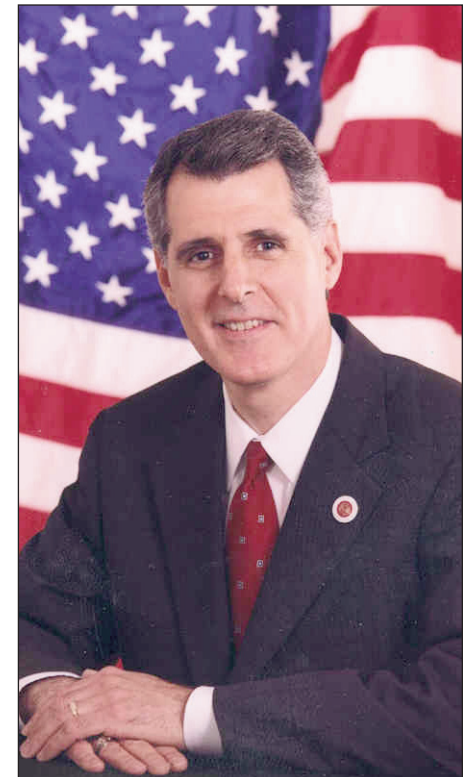
greenhouse gas emissions in these buildings.

Third is a measure that would require lighting systems in large buildings be upgraded to meet a greener standard. Lighting systems consume 20 percent of energy used in buildings in New York City.

The final bill will create an energy code for New York City buildings. The new code will be more stringent than the New York State energy code, which the city currently uses. The new code will close a loophole that allows buildings to ignore energy regulations in certain cases.

Years from now, people will look back at this legislative package as the moment when city government, critical stakeholders and concerned citizenry came together to transform our buildings into centers of environmental innovation, showcases of engineering excellence and engines of economic revitalization. These bills are transformative for our environment, a boon to our economy and a beacon to other cities on the journey to environmental sustainability. I am honored to partner with Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Council Speaker Christine Quinn in shepherding these bills through the legislative process.

City Councilmember James Gennaro represents District 24 in the Council and is the Chair of the Environmental Protection Committee.



City Councilmember James Gennaro

The Creation Of Micro Small Businesses To Jump-Start The Economy

By Assemblymember Jose R. Peralta

Small businesses account for more than 99 percent of businesses in New York State and employ over 55 percent of the state's workforce. Small businesses are the backbone of the state's economy, and we must play a vital role in ensuring they get the support they need for continued growth. The current financial crisis only increases their importance because it is through small businesses that we can jump-start the economy and place it back on track.

Small businesses are defined as those businesses employing 100 people or less, and they include more than 1 million in New York State. Eight out of 10 jobs are created by small businesses. In recent years, the majority of small businesses have included those with less than 10 employees, and have been minority or women-owned. These so called "very small businesses," have become major players in the state's economy, and if we are to recuperate from this downfall, we must look there first.

This year, legislation passed the Assembly that would ensure federal funding was made available to special business programs initiat-

ed in the heart of our communities. A series of bills were passed to help small businesses be competitive, productive and profitable in New York State. Of major importance was the creation of Micro Business Outreach Centers that would hone in on "micro small businesses" requiring less than \$35,000 to start and employing less than five people. These micro centers would help individuals who may not have the knowledge or experience to open up an enterprise, and would assist them with proper business planning and loans. Key to this operation, are women-owned and minority-based businesses because they have demonstrated continued growth since 1997. New York State has traditionally been supportive of these types of economic programs and are usually the precursors of more widespread funding to much greater populations throughout the state.

As the economic crisis continues to affect our communities and our business world, we must assume responsibility and devise appropriate plans to curtail this downward economic spiral. We must look back in time and remember our humble beginnings. We must remember how our forefathers began centuries ago –as a single and small unit –and

worked their way up. Not the other way around.

Queens is home to a large immigrant community where almost 50 percent of its residents are foreign-born. We must reinvigorate our diverse and immigrant community and avail proper assistance for their economic growth, especially in the poorer areas. Micro small businesses will cater to the needs of their particular community thus increasing their chances of success as they have demonstrated in the past several years. This in turn, will create a domino effect that will eventually stimulate neighboring communities.

At the end, the entire state will benefit from this restructuring. In order to accomplish this, we must continue to keep the American dream of success of a better life of owning your own home and of having your own business, alive. It becomes our responsibility to provide adequate assistance to turn these dreams into reality.

Assemblymember Jose R. Peralta represents District 39 in Queens in the Assembly. He is also running for State Senate in September and will likely challenge Hiram Monserrate in the primary.



Assemblymember Jose R. Peralta