Testimony of the New York University Tandon School of Engineering
before
The New York City Council Committee on Economic Development

January 23, 2018

Chairman Vallone and fellow Council Members, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the New York University Tandon School of Engineering. We are pleased to share how the NYU community is engaged in the City’s efforts to promote the growth and success of Brooklyn Navy Yard revitalization efforts.

In October of 2018, along with New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME), and the Brooklyn Navy Yard, NYU Tandon announced the launch of RLab – the first City-funded virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR) lab in the country. Administered by NYU Tandon in coordination with a consortium of New York City universities, RLab will operate out of Building 22 in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and will cement New York City’s status as a global leader in VR/AR, connecting New Yorkers with over 750 jobs in the industry. RLab is a component of Mayor de Blasio’s New York Works plan, which aims to create 100,000 jobs over 10 years.

New York City anchor industries – healthcare, education, real estate, retail, live entertainment and video entertainment – are slated to be among the most impacted by VR/AR. At the same time, given its diverse talent pool and vibrant business ecosystem, New York City is uniquely positioned to become a leader in VR/AR. NYU Tandon remains committed to working with the city and other local partner institutions, including Columbia University, CUNY, and The New School, to capitalize on this opportunity.

The RLab will support new ventures with workspace and early-stage capital, make the industry more accessible through workforce development initiatives, and convene investors, university researchers, corporate leaders, and community organizations to collaborate around New York City’s emerging VR/AR sector. New projects and startups with tremendous potential for growth are already underway – we expect much more to come.

By offering extensive workforce development programs, the RLab will build upon the Brooklyn Navy Yard’s success in engaging the local community. These programs will foster technical, creative and commercial skillsets that will prepare participants to find new opportunities in an emerging technology sector. Educational components will be complemented by a career opportunity program that will create hands-on experiential learning opportunities for students of all ages and academic backgrounds. A progressive approach to financing will create a pool of scholarship resources available to students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds from New York City universities and schools.

Brooklyn is the fastest growing hub of technology in the country, and NYU Tandon is a proud partner of the borough’s efforts to further this growth. Through our network of Future Labs — entrepreneurial hubs dedicated to Digital, Urban, and Veteran-owned startups — we’re helping make the borough we call home a mecca for the world’s most forward-thinking, entrepreneurial, and creative people. We look forward to continue working with the city in areas such as Brooklyn Navy Yard to change reality for
hundreds of job-seeking New Yorkers and make the Borough, and the city at-large, a leader in the burgeoning tech industry.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our exciting programs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and we welcome any additional questions the Committee may have. (Please contact Konstantine Tettonis, NYU Government Affairs, kt1249@nyu.edu)