



**New York City Council  
Committee on Economic Development  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 9, 2018**

Good morning Chair Vallone and members of the Council Committee on Economic Development. My name is Alex Camarda, and I am the Senior Policy Advisor for Reinvent Albany. Reinvent Albany, focuses on government transparency and accountability in the State Capitol, including business subsidies. We also weigh in on city open government matters, and have been a leading voice in New York City on issues like Open Data and the Freedom of Information Law. We have also previously testified at length before the City Council on economic development transparency.

EDC has taken important steps in recent years to make its work more transparent. **Reinvent Albany was pleased the Council passed [Local Law 222 in 2017](#), which we supported.** The law largely codifies the [existing practice](#) of the New York City Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) annual *Project Information Report and Spreadsheet*. This report provides detailed data regarding taxpayer-subsidized projects including their name, location, type of benefits received, subsidy amount, different types of jobs produced, and any curtailment of benefits when project goals are not met. EDC's Project Information report and Local Law 222 serves as a model for State government, which has nowhere near the City's level of transparency.

In addition to implementation of Local Law 222, Reinvent Albany believes EDC can build on its solid foundation of transparency by doing the following:

- 1. Put its tabular data in the city's Open Data portal.** The New York City Economic Development Corporation is subject to the city's landmark [Open Data law](#). Yet EDC has only [7 datasets](#) in the city's Open Data portal. Nor does it have any new datasets scheduled to be released in the [2017 Open Data Progress report](#). It could start to comply with the Open Data Law by putting the very good project data, land sales, and lease list data on its website in the portal and automating updates to those datasets, which will reduce time spent reporting data by EDC (see: <https://www.nycedc.com/about-nycedc/financial-public-documents>)
- 2. Webcast its board and committee meetings and archive meeting videos on its website for access by the public and stakeholders,** as is required by section 1063

of the New York City Charter for city agencies. EDC is a not-for-profit corporation, not a city agency. However, it oversees the NYC Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and Build NYC, corporate entities which [webcast and archive their meetings](#).

- 3. Coordinate with the Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) so Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests can be made centrally through the [city's OpenRecords portal](#).** We understand this is in motion and encourage EDC to do so as quickly as possible. EDC, to its credit, informs website visitors of how to request a record from EDC.
- 4. Make its spending more transparent by sharing its data with [Checkbook NYC](#) run by the NYC Comptroller which makes public all spending by city agencies and entities.** The public cannot easily figure out how EDC spends taxpayer dollars. EDC only shows up in the [Checkbook NYC](#) site run by the NYC Comptroller as a vendor to city agencies, namely Small Business Services, with which it has hundreds of contracts, mostly for consulting.
- 5. Post on its website the Annual Filings for Charitable Organizations (990 form) filed with the Attorney General's Office.** The most recent filing that is publicly available is for 2015, and only on the Attorney General's Charities Bureau website.
- 6. Make available to the public all master and maritime contracts with the city. These contracts appear to total more than \$500 million.**
- 7. Make available to the public contracts it has with Small Business Services (SBS) and make easily accessible any contracts EDC, in turn, has with other city agencies, corporations and vendors.**
- 8. Disclose conflicts of interests by EDC, Build NYC or IDA Board members, and specific recusals by board members from voting and deliberation on resolutions before the Board.** EDC's conflicts of interest policy allows board members of its affiliates to have a financial or other interest in a contract or transaction by a company doing business with EDC provided they disclose the interest, and do not take part in deliberations or voting. The public has no idea how many or which transactions or contracts have come before the Board where members have had an interest.

Thank you for your testimony today. I welcome any questions you may have.