

“The Empire Strikes Back”

Good morning and thank you to all for inviting me to testify before this committee. I am Mike DiMarino, President of Linda Tool. We are a second generation family owned manufacturer of precision machined components and assemblies located in Brooklyn, NY. Linda Tool has been located in Brooklyn NY since its inception in 1952. Manufacturing in New York has always been as much of a challenge as it has been a blessing. New York has always enjoyed a rich history of manufacturing and cutting edge technology. Most people don't realize that New York is the proud owner of the Coleman gas lamp mantle. It was invented on Canal Street NYC. The company today, Navis-Global, is still a major customer of Linda Tool and has been since 1964. It produces high tech cloth processing equipment and Linda Tool makes components that no other company has made. NY was also home to the largest manufacturer of window envelope machinery in the world, FL Smithe located on West 44th through 48th Street in Manhattan a cutting edge technology in its day. The Bommer Hinge Co., AMF, maker of bowling alley equipment, Mergenthaler Linotype, CorrectoType. Even EX-Lax belongs to NYC. These were all companies with cutting edge technology at the time.

Whether it is 1950 or 2016 NYC still is a great place to manufacture and has so much to offer. NY now boasts a robust 3D Printer Industry, a rapidly growing Drone manufacturing sector, cutting edge technology in recycling and Bio-Fuel. Honeybee Robotics of Manhattan was instrumental in the Mars Rover. This is all made possible by the opportunities that NY has to offer. Most recently NYC schools have placed an emphasis on the development of manufacturing skills. Linda Tool recently hired 2 graduates from City Tech who went through their Mfg. Engineering Curriculum. These 2 new employees have the skills necessary to help Linda Tool move forward in the next phase of manufacturing. Their skills acquired in school coupled with Linda Tools “old world” manufacturing skills is already paying off with some great advanced technology capabilities. The schools are on the right track but need more “hands on” training in their curriculum as this would make graduates much more job ready. I personally would love to see an apprenticeship program for the manufacturing sector in place in the future.

The challenges are many. They are difficult but you can understand some of it. Trying to marry the urban life with industrial production is a challenge to anybody or any city that tries to do it. The NYC Industrial Business Zones are one aspect that helps those of us trying to maintain a viable business in NY. One of the main challenges going forward is the loss of commercial and industrial property. Gentrification is probably the biggest obstacle. As commercial and industrial areas are rezoned it drives the price of the real estate to such high levels that economics just fail when trying to maintain a business. The preservation of the IBZ's will greatly help with this but they must be maintained.

The ability to move forward in this sector of technology can only have good benefits for all. Linda Tool itself was once an old world, smoky, under lit hazardous place to be employed. Today it is a modern, air conditioned, well lit, well equipped manufacturing facility that boasts an average employment stay of 15 years. We also are one of the few, if not the only, manufacturer in NYC that boasts a Green Roof on the entire roof of its facility. We also have a wage scale that meets or exceeds our industry. And personally it is very satisfying to see employees of the company thrive. The higher wage scale is because of our ability to introduce higher technology into our business. This may not result in the head counts of yesteryear but it most certainly lends itself to a higher paying job for those that acquire the skills to do so.

So looking back New York has always been a technology leader in many aspects. Obviously the technology has changed drastically and many today have no idea of some of the things that were previously mentioned in this testimony. But regardless NY was always a leader in advanced technology in its day. Looking to the future I believe there is a bright spot for us in the manufacturing sector as long as we preserve our industrial zones and concentrate on educating and training our schooled in “hands on” and what to expect in the working world. A good part of that is the work that our local development organizations are doing coupled with the work that NYC SBS is doing.