The Handwork Landscape: New York City Garment District

Nest’s Makers United Project
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Introduction

Nest’s Makers United program is a multi-stakeholder initiative that connects and strengthens the wide diversity of maker and maker-businesses across the United States, building a vibrant and inclusive maker community. The program identifies and supports makers who face greater barriers to expanding their market reach and accessing business development services that support growth. Leveraging the maker movement’s potential to generate opportunity for all makers, regardless of sex, race, economic means, or physical ability, Makers United is committed to building and fostering an inclusive creative economy.

New York City’s Garment District has been recognized as the center of American fashion manufacturing for the last century, but in more recent years has been confronting huge challenges driven by an increasingly globalized and digitized world. Occupying less than a square mile in Midtown Manhattan, between 34th and 40th streets and Broadway and Ninth Aves, the district today is home to around 400 fashion production businesses employing approximately 5000 individuals,¹ about 95% less from its peak in the 1950’s.

The following Landscape Report offers insights into the manufacturing community of the New York Garment District, highlighting the unique challenges and barriers they face in remaining relevant for the future. Through this report, we share insights that can be used to support a more vibrant creative economy for businesses in both a pre-Covid-19, and particularly post-Covid-19, world.

This report also seeks to highlight the diversity of the people make up the Garment District ecosystem. Like much of New York’s history, the history of the Garment District begins with a story of immigrants seeking opportunity and building community. The New York garment industry was built by working-class immigrants, and continues to be shaped by immigrant entrepreneurs today, notably from the Chinese, Korean, and Latinx communities.

In an industry that is often characterized as impersonal and opaque, this report uncovers a highly localized network of suppliers and producers built on word-of-mouth and personal relationships. Business owners surveyed noted that over 75% of their clients are located in New York City, and that their proximity to these brands is critical to their success.

The Garment District Community

The Garment District is characterized by a hybrid cluster of businesses, ranging from designers, long-time mom-and-pop suppliers, fabric and trim stores, small-scale and larger-scale manufacturers to Broadway costume makers who rely on the proximity of this network for knowledge sharing and resources. Often, these businesses are clustered in one building: In one high-rise on 37th Street, one can find a cutting room on one floor, a pleater on the next, and a cut-and-sew factory on the floor above and a textile showroom on another.

This density gives these businesses a competitive advantage by fostering an interdependent ecosystem, and providing a convenient destination for designers. One owner of a cut-and-sew factory says that the Garment District functions as a one-stop destination for designers. “The designers can get all their materials from a few storefronts in one day.” Walking down 38th Street, you can find stores that sell everything from shoulder pads to leather. Another business owner who has been in the industry for more than 25 years echoes this sentiment of the importance of the centrality of the Garment District. Many of her customers are from the Hasidic Jewish community in Brooklyn but conduct business in midtown Manhattan and therefore conveniently located to the Garment District where they go for custom orders.

Survey findings noted word-of-mouth as the most relied upon communication tool, and it’s not difficult to understand why. For an industry that depends on a highly collaborative process, it is not uncommon for a designer to bump into a factory or shop owner either in an elevator or down Eighth Avenue, and it is through these serendipitous yet frequent encounters that a trusting community is built.

One of the District’s strongest manufacturing assets is that the businesses tend to be smaller, and therefore more nimble when it comes to production—allowing for smaller runs and faster sampling and development. This exactly the type of environment that lends itself to rapid and exploratory ideas for all designers and creatives. While many larger established brands may move larger production orders overseas, even design veterans keep much of their sampling and prototyping in the District.

For young designers who benefit from the collective expertise, the District provides not only an unmatched concentration of extraordinary skill and craftsmanship, but the ability to do everything from concept to production, and allows them to grow their businesses from the ground up.
Approach and Methodology

Nest included two primary data sources in this study:

- Nest’s Makers United Landscape survey
- Exploratory interviews for descriptive information with District businesses

Nest’s approach included qualitative data collected through a series of deep-dive interviews as well as quantitative data from an extensive landscape survey of business owners developed in collaboration with Custom Collaborative, the Pratt Center, and ITAC. These collection tools shed light on the business owners’ needs, challenges in the industry, the available resources and the limitations of those resources, and uncovered opportunities to create a thriving Garment District community. The exploratory interviews supported the landscape analysis by filling in the knowledge gaps and gaining deeper insights into the business owners’ needs that were not addressed though the survey.

Stakeholders were primarily identified through the CFDA, Garment District Alliance, and Made in NYC’s database and network. Customized outreach methods such as phone calls, emails, referrals, and in-person meetings, ensured a wide net that reached beyond well-connected business owners. The target population includes businesses that manufacture, produce, or sell within the apparel or accessories industry, with special consideration given to the racial/ethnic diversity of business owners in the Garment District. To build connections with the non-English speaking population, the written survey was translated into Chinese, Spanish, and Korean, accounting for 40% of survey responses and oral facilitation was conducted in Chinese and Spanish, accounting for 26% of survey responses.

The survey—developed to understand the make up businesses in the Garment District, including the artisans, skills, and the business needs—was administered digitally using Qualtrics survey software and largely through on-site interviews. The data collected from the landscape survey was aggregated to analyze trends in demographics and production practices among the makers. This report presents a descriptive representation of district artisans and district businesses in the New York City’s Garment District.
District Landscape

THE GARMENT DISTRICT COMPRISSES THE AREA BETWEEN BROADWAY AND 9TH AVE AND BETWEEN 34TH AND 40TH STREETS

District Artisans include business owners, craftspeople and workers who practice craft or hand work in-house within the Garment District including cutting, sewing, knitting, beading, embellishment, embroidery, pleating, pattern making, draping, pressing, finishing, marking, leatherwork and other similar work.

District Businesses include designers, wholesalers or retailers located in the Garment District.

105 District Artisans surveyed

32 District Businesses and District Artisans interviewed

3 District Industries (manufacturing, retail, wholesale)

11 Product Categories

9 Product Categories that have 3 or more District Businesses represented
Who are the District Artisans and Businesses?

- **43%** of businesses are female owned and led

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average years in the industry</th>
<th>Average years at current business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>24 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 years</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **73%** are English-speakers while **48%** speak a second or third language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **40%** preferred another language besides English for the survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Culture</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latinx</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American or Black</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **73%** of businesses are minority owned and led
What are they Producing or Selling?

Percent of Artisans/Businesses Producing or Selling within Each Product Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparel (Cut and Sew, Marking/Grading, Pleating)</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Accessories</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparel (Knitting / Crochet)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design services</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Textiles</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novelty items</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet products</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys / Children’s product</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabric/textiles</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Artisans/Businesses Producing in Multiple Categories

- 1 Product Category: 31%
- 2 Product Categories: 24%
- 3 Product Categories: 21%
- 4 or more: 23%
Key Findings
The New York Garment District is an *industry of immigrants built by immigrants*. The diversity of this ecosystem has contributed to a richer labor market, one that brings together a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and inspirations.
Many businesses have been in the industry for so long that much of their business is **built on word-of-mouth and direct referrals** from their personal networks. When asked where they look for talent, **77%** of respondents still depend on traditional word-of-mouth or referrals. An owner of a pattern-making business mentioned that says that she and other business owners will post advertisements inside Fu Xing, the remaining Chinese restaurant in the neighborhood that caters to local garment workers. “That’s how I found him,” she says, pointing to the only male employee in her studio.

While the reliance on word-to-mouth referrals may promote a tight-knit, communal spirit for some, in today’s globalized and digitized world, this approach also creates **an industry that is opaque and difficult for outsiders to navigate, creating a sense of fragmentation**. One business owner described the Garment District as “cliquey”. Those who face language barriers and lack connections to the establishment are at a particular disadvantage.

The role of word-of-mouth in doing business speaks to the need for more **intentional outreach to those that are underrepresented or underserved**. One specific example cited was during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in New York City, when the city was in dire need of PPE production for masks and gowns. One successful Garment District business that doesn’t produce apparel or accessories products was granted the PPE production order from the city, and instead of producing the order, performed more as an agent by distributing the PPE order to selected manufacturing “friends”.

57% of business owners cited decreased sales / lack of work as the top challenge facing their business

Business owners identified the **top 3 areas they would like to develop over the following months**, which could directly impact their sales growth.

**Production & Operations: 45%**

- Pricing (25%)
- Lean Manufacturing (20%)
- Sustainable Production Practices (17%)

The **cost of labor** was a common concern amongst business owners. Producing locally is more expensive because of the higher wage costs, especially when it comes to specialized crafts such as embroidery.

**Branding & Marketing: 24%**

- Social Media (32%)
- Developing a brand identity and story (24%)

One co-owner of a cut-and-sew facility, cites an American-designer with an expansive international presence as a brand that recently decided to bring back more of their development and production to New York. He believes that there is a **lack of awareness of the benefits of manufacturing locally**.

**Sales & Merchandising: 19%**

- Online Sales Strategies (32%)
- Wholesale Sales Strategies/Opportunities (23%)
- Identifying your target market (19%)

Many factories have said that the **current tradeshows are catered towards students or young designers** and they haven’t been as successful as hoped for.

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"My biggest concern is the cost of labor is beyond what the customer is willing to pay for the work. In my business particularly, I can not compete with India where the labor cost is extremely low for hand embroidery and beading. I worry that if the designers don’t change their budget and expectation of what it costs to manufacture in Manhattan, that businesses like mine won’t be able to remain open."

—Owner of an Embroidery Studio

"I started an online blog because I wanted to ensure I was documenting my family’s long textile history, and my father still has so much knowledge that I want to learn. Additionally, I think it’s important to educate my clients about pleating, and how to do it right. But we can’t tell you everything, there’s still some family secrets!"

—5th generation textile craftsman, and co-owner of pleating business

"I would like to be able to expand my customer reach through direct-to-consumer channels. Right now, I’m mostly working with wholesale accounts, but I’ve been collecting so many vintage pieces that inspires my own design ideas that I think could be great to sell in my own shop."

—5th generation textile craftsman, and co-owner of pleating business
43% of business owners ranked rent and overhead costs as the top challenge after lack of work/sales.

“Rising rents are our number one bully. We depend on the district for its ecosystem of vendors and its proximity to the theatre and fashion industries. The thought of doing enough business to survive somewhere other than the Garment District is daunting and not sustainable.

—Owner of glove-making business

The majority of business owners want to remain in the Garment District and believe their location is critical to their competitiveness. 74% of business owners feel that they are closely connected to the people and resources they need to grow their business.

But the high costs of real estate are threatening the future of manufacturing businesses and many are leaving to make way for more tourist and leisure-friendly businesses. Ernie, the owner and founder of a local business, cites the need for “protection from zoning changes that nibble away at manufacturing districts. There are too many hotels being allowed into the manufacturing districts.”

Business owners feel that the government needs to play a greater role in creating long-term affordable commercial real estate options for manufacturers. For one owner, this would take the form of “A co-op building for manufacturing businesses, where they can rent or buy their own space. This would sustain the garment business because rents will be stabilized. Moving the entire Garment District to the Navy Yard won’t work because it will just become another “Williamsburg” and there will be another rent hike.”

Photo Credit: Wing and Weft Gloves
23% of business owners listed outstanding payments as the top challenge.

Business owners expressed frustration and helplessness when it comes to dealing with clients who don’t pay for their services or don’t pay on time. While some have pursued the legal route against brands that do not pay, others expressed an unwillingness to go after brands in order to maintain a positive working relationship, in hopes for future orders from brands that still produce locally.

“I’ve dealt with many non-paying clients and surprisingly, the bigger name brands tend to be the least reliable. I’m still waiting for payment for work I completed a year ago from one company. A few years ago, I won a case in small claims court for a client after numerous attempts to secure payment. But that’s never the favorable option.”—40-year veteran pattern-maker and business owner

Other business owners shared similar experiences and spoke to the need for a way to share information with other business owners, so they can learn from one another’s experiences.
13% of business owners listed labor force and skills gap as the top challenge.

- **50%** of businesses have difficulty finding the skilled workforce they need.
- **52%** hire freelance or contract workers when they need specialized or skilled work.
- **57%** ranked “specialized skill set” as the top 3 qualifications for hiring.
- and **93%** of those attribute this to a dying workforce, high labor costs, or lack of adequate training.

Because of the lack of skilled labor, there is a high demand for craftspeople.

While several businesses attribute a lack of adequate training in the skills needed, a few businesses noticed a shift in education.

Many business owners say the industry has an image problem.

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**“**There are not enough skilled workers for the demand. There is a huge demand for pattern-makers, seamstresses, cutters. There are not very many people who want to work in these roles. —Owner of a dress couturier

**“**The Garment District is sadly disappearing and with that, the infrastructure of skilled labor is leaving also. I have noticed that the fashion schools are cutting classes in important areas of the production process. —Owner of a grading and marking business

**“**The United States in general does not value workforce labor thus does not train our children in basic skillset with tools of any kind [...] This leads to disregard by emerging students into workforce of the labor force—not only is it a “blue collar” job but underpaid and underappreciated. —Owner of custom costume production shop
Future Planning

Survey participants noted that they have been in the industry for an average of almost 25 years, with 83% considering their businesses in mid-stage or mature stage of business growth.

Statistics show that succession planning is a neglected area of business planning, and this finding is also affirmed by the landscape survey as 68% of business owners indicate they do not know or do not have a plan when it comes to the future of their business.
Exploratory Interviews Reflections

While the Makers United Landscape Survey provided quantitative data, critical qualitative insights came out of discovery conversations with business owners. In efforts to develop a more trusting rapport and a better understanding of their unique needs and challenges, the majority of the interviews were conducted in person (practicing safe and distanced protocols), and others via phone call.

Key findings from these interviews are detailed on the following pages.
The Garment District’s tight-knit cluster promotes greater creativity, collaboration and resource-sharing.

Business owners feel that having all the suppliers and producers in one central area is critical to the District’s competitive advantage. With 74% of business owners stating that they are closely connected to the people and resources they need to grow their business, businesses in the District are interdependent upon one another, and their business success relies on the success of their fellow business owners. The connections within the District are built on years of mutual support.

In fact, 39% of respondents said they rely on fellow business owners or their own networks when looking for support or business related needs, followed by an online search engine (20%), and themselves (9%). The mix of different businesses in close proximity allows for greater productivity and creative synergy. A designer can purchase fabric across the street and drop it off at a cut-and-sew factory, who may then pass along work to a pleater and grader/marker that are all located within a couple of blocks, or even in the same building.
Business owners expressed frustration about both the unequal distribution of resource and support as well as the difficulty in accessing certain resources, pointing to socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic disparities.

**Race, Diversity and Language Barriers**
In conducting the landscape mapping research, Nest found that broadening language accessibility was the first step to inclusion and paramount in achieving a comprehensive analysis of District businesses. 71% of business owners were born outside the US, and 40% of Garment District business owners requested the survey in a language other than English. Facilitation of oral translations represented 26% of all survey responses conducted in Chinese and Spanish.

One owner of a cutting-business mentioned that his English is not great and found it difficult to navigate loan and grant resources. Additionally, language barriers also make it challenging for business owners who speak limited English, particularly as it comes to negotiation with landlords. One cut-and-sew factory, said her landlord is refusing to speak with her in regards to rent payments during the Covid-19 lock down.

**Education and Income**
The survey responses indicate the top and bottom brackets were the most commonly represented groups for income and education, suggesting socioeconomic disparities influence the inequities experienced by business owners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$150K+:</td>
<td>College or Postgrad degrees: <strong>58%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35-50K:</td>
<td>No-college degrees: <strong>36%</strong></td>
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</table>
New York City’s design and production houses often cater towards a luxury market, which often requires smaller production outputs and highly specialized skill sets. Several business owners cited the need for and importance of hand skills that have been lost due to offshoring and lack of training and investment in these skills.

“Young people are not trained for factory work. Many don’t know how to sew [or] how to sew quickly and nicely. Older more qualified people already have high paying jobs that they will not leave. I also need to do training here for making gloves as that is never a skill anyone has when they come to me. That is an investment on my part”—Owner of one of the last District glove-producers
Distinctiveness and specialization are key to the competitiveness of businesses because it allows businesses to focus on a few strengths and demonstrate they can do something that is difficult to emulate, and do it exceptionally well. As most of the data used to support this observation was extracted through interview expressions shared below, more in-depth research is needed to provide a conclusive explanation.

“People tell me all the time, that there is nowhere in the world that is able to do what we do. Our edge is offering a range of embellishment under the umbrella of embroidery and we do it all locally in the Garment District. Most factories specialize in one technique only. It is a wonderful thing to be such a one of a kind place that people come to get all of their embellishment made. Instead of having to coordinate with 6 different factories, customers come to me for it all.
—Owner of an embroidery business”
Impact of Covid-19

Outstanding payments and canceled orders due to Covid-19 shutdowns are putting even more stress on capital-strained small businesses.

Upon our visits to District businesses for interviews, the consequences of canceled orders in the middle of the pandemic were sobering: partially-completed production, fabrics still on the cutting tables, neatly stacked pattern pieces waiting to be sewn.

“They [established fashion brand] have four outstanding bills that I’m waiting to be paid. I tried emailing them a few times but I think my contact was furloughed or laid off, so I’m not sure what to do. Also, a Brooklyn-based manufacturer outsourced 3,000 PPE gowns to us, but also haven’t not been paid for that either so I haven’t been able to pay my cutting room. I’m struggling with making my rent payments but if they paid me, I could make rent.—District factory owner

98% of businesses have been negatively impacted by Covid-19
Impact of Covid-19

Home-based Work

In an industry that requires specialized equipment and close communication, most jobs cannot be done remotely from home.

74% of businesses could not offer remote work

Of those businesses that had remote work available

67% offered remote work to their employees

and 94% were able to provide the supplies needed to support remote work

and 69% will continue remote working
Impact of Covid-19

Primary barriers for employees to return to work:

1. Lack of business or canceled orders

76% of business owners listed this as their main barrier to return to work. Brands are mostly focusing on low-risk sampling and have significantly reduced their production because of market uncertainty.

"Due to COVID restrictions, I can’t sell to wholesale clients right now because we can’t have presentations or market weeks. It’s too hard to get new private clients which was a part of my business that was starting to grow [prior to shut downs]. Stores are closing or declaring bankruptcy. I finished the orders I had, and I don’t know how to get new orders now.—Owner of a dress couturier"

2. Covid-19-related health and safety concerns

24% of business owners listed this as their main barrier to return to work. Joanna Design Source asked their sewers if they were willing to do PPE production during the lockdown, but they preferred to stay home for safety reasons and were able to collect federal and state unemployment checks.

"We need more support in protecting our employees to make them feel safe coming to work here.—Accessories factory owner"
Impact of Covid-19: PPE Production

Many business owners expressed a desire to produce PPE in response to the city’s demand for more supply, but faced challenges in their efforts to participate:

There was a lot of confusion around the application process due to lack of transparency. It was largely based on personal connections and “who you know.” Business owners were also reluctant to share information with each other due to competition.

The requirements for PPE production was challenging for smaller factories to prepare in a short amount of time. Businesses needed access to capital to upfront bulk materials and/or equipment or additional regulation requirements.

Bidding process drives prices down and is not profitable for business owners. Many PPE production opportunities were granted to businesses in Brooklyn and Long Island City because the costs were less than in the District.

"I tried calling the city a few times when [Governor] Cuomo was calling for manufacturers to produce PPE and didn’t hear back."
—Owner of a cut-and-sew facility

"A designer we’d worked with in the past reached out to ask if they wanted to do PPE production, but they required that they pay for a specific cleaning company to clean their factory ahead of time."
—District factory owner

"The prices for PPE gowns was previously $30/gown and has now gone down to around $19/gown. I can’t make any profit from this as this will go to covering overhead, rent and wages."
—Owner of a cut-and-sew facility

only 32% of district businesses were able to pivot some or all of their production to PPE

only 32% of district businesses were able to pivot some or all of their production to PPE
Summary: What We’ve Learned

Businesses that are here want to stay here

The majority of business owners want to remain in the Garment District and believe their location is critical to their competitiveness.

- **76%** of business owners strongly or somewhat agree that the Garment District is a great place to start a creative business.
- **83%** of business owners indicated that their customers are located either within the Garment District or in NYC.

Industry mobilization: A commitment to support local manufacturers

Many business owners feel that designers and big brands need to be incentivized to keep production local and that existing initiatives need to focus more on creating sustainable solutions. While young designers may get enough funding to produce locally for a few years, they may be unable to sustain their work once their funding runs out.

The owner of a textile pleating business says “There is no incentive for people to keep the work in the Garment District. The people who make here and the people who buy locally-made need to be rewarded.” He sees the need for a campaign or a large-scale movement to mobilize industry leaders to make a commitment to local production.

“[I hope to see] more emerging designers with capital to give sufficient orders to factories; more developers to bridge the gap between the unexperienced designers and the factories who are used to working with established brands; more support from organizations and government to grow and develop aged and outdated factories; more strict rules and regulations for those factories operating illegally, in terms of wages, as this affects entire ecosystem of the garment district.—District fashion incubator
Businesses are seeking an industry-specific association to represent their interests and share resources with each other

Business owners discussed hearing about resources largely through their personal networks, with most communications occurring through word-of-mouth. When asked who they turn to for business-related questions or needs, 38% of respondents said they rely on fellow business owners or their own networks when looking for support or business-related needs, followed by an online search engine (20%). Less than 24% responded that they seek help from local formalized programs combined, such as local non-profit programs, industry-specific organizations, neighborhood associations, the Local Chamber of Commerce, or small business incubators.

Who do you turn to for business-related questions or needs?

Another benefit of having more vendor-to-vendor communication and organization would be increased transparency and more collective power in pursuing common goals. The difficulty that many business owners shared while trying to secure PPE work highlights this need. While many expressed an interest in pivoting to PPE production, they described the application process as opaque and confusing. Those that were able to successfully apply had the right connections. One owner spoke of the need for a more formalized organization representative of all businesses to advocate on the behalf of manufacturers that could secure a PPE contract and provide more equitable distribution of the work among businesses.

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Where We Go From Here

CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS
Nest will lead a series of capacity building workshops focused on a core set of the identified needs from the Landscape Mapping Survey, utilizing the Garment District Alliance’s strategic coalition of organizations supporting this project, and Nest’s robust network of industry consultants to facilitate the sessions. As we have done in other Makers United cities, Nest will lean on its institutional partnerships to ensure the effort is drawing the strongest expertise while also maximizing engagement and overall support.

Workshop curricula for the initial capacity building workshops will be tailored in direct response to data collected during this research phase to address the most prevalent and pressing needs expressed by the district artisans and businesses. These workshops will be facilitated in a way that encourages engagement and community between Garment District businesses, brands, fashion designers, and local establishments. These will largely be conducted via Zoom as the COVID pandemic continues to pose health concerns for in-person gathering. However, small groups may be assembled with masks and appropriate social distancing for those where technology support will be necessary. As language translation was revealed as a top need during Landscape Mapping, Nest will have workshop materials available in the top languages requested to ensure accessibility.

Nest looks forward to leading the following workshops beginning in early 2021:

LEGAL: TENANT RIGHTS + CONTRACTS (A TWO PART SERIES)
As the landscape mapping was conducted during the period where many businesses were re-emerging from Covid-19 lockdowns, many of the responses were around the immediate needs regarding their commercial tenant rights, and how to get leverage in negotiation with landlords. The goal for this portion of the workshop is to provide more transparency around rent payment rights as well as legal resources to business owners. For the second part of the workshop, Nest will look to address one of the top challenges listed, “outstanding payments”, and will share best practices for payment protection from clients.

STRATEGIC SALES PARTNERSHIPS
With 83% of respondents indicating their customers are located either within the Garment District or in NYC, Nest will be hosting an Artisan Showcase event, inviting buyers, designers, brands, and local establishments to meet and learn from District Artisans and businesses. The goal for the showcase will be to foster dialogue for new potential partnerships, but also engage in partnerships that may have offshored and looking for opportunities to produce locally again.

SKILLS TRAINING AND HANDWORK PRESERVATION
93% of those who find it challenging to find skilled handworkers attribute it to a dying workforce, high labor costs, or lack of adequate training. With the belief that handcraft and preservation are critical to the survival of the Garment District, Nest looks to provide workshops to promote the training and workforce development of skilled handworkers.
MAKERS UNITED NYC GARMENT DISTRICT WAS GENEROUSLY FUNDED BY:

The landscape mapping was conducted in collaboration with partners of the Garment District Alliance’s Business Development Coalition including
To learn more about Nest's Makers United Program, please visit buildanest.org