

**DEVELOPING A SMARTER GARMENT CENTER:
Stimulating local manufacturing and economic development in New York City's Garment District**

HOST: Tasha Lewis

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Urban garment manufacturing is being reborn. Its growth is being driven by a variety of factors, from very deep and global forces such as rising energy, transportation, materials and waste disposal costs, to cultural shifts including growing consumer preferences for distinctive environmentally responsible, locally-produced products, to the emergence of a class of artistic entrepreneurs who want to blend their artistic passions with actual production and turn their art into a business and lifestyle. This new class of micro-manufacturers thrives in cities, like New York City, particularly within the fashion and design sectors.

In fact, the fashion industry has remained an economic engine for New York City, contributing \$10BN annually to the local economy. Currently ~165,000 jobs are provided in NYC's garment manufacturing sector with around 99,000 of those jobs on the production side. Fashion manufacturing currently represents 31% of all manufacturing within the city. And beyond jobs and revenue, the industry's presence is inseparable from NYC's cultural identity, exerting a powerful influence on film, media, print, web and education.

Over the past decades, however, city planning departments have rezoned areas that threaten local manufacturing. In New York, more than 20MN square feet of industrial space over the past eight years has been turned into luxury housing and waterfront amenities. This act of rezoning in addition to the lack of political power -- as well as the lack of appropriate tools, financing, and marketing to connect new, emerging, and current designers to local manufacturers - as well as build awareness among consumer groups - is contributing to the loss of a thriving manufacturing center in NYC.

Multiple organizations are mapping the garment district however none address the issue of connectivity between businesses. Source4Style, a B2B marketplace connecting designers to sustainable suppliers around the world, conducted research in 2010 with 40 manufacturers and found that *not one* factory was at capacity. Additionally, many designers on the Source4Style platform have expressed the need to be able to locate appropriate facilities that can produce their collections.

This lunch seeks to explore the intersection of apparel manufacturing, urban planning, and technology to explore practical but also research-based solutions to help conserve the integrity of local manufacturing and economic development in an urban setting and develop partnerships that can provide solutions to connect current designers with manufacturers.

Overview of the local (and global) industry and its key players is provided by Summer Rayne Oakes, (Cornell alumna, *Natural Resources & Entomology '04*).