

New Look For Historic District In J.H.

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Five businesses in Jackson Heights have a new look and feel, thanks to the storefront Restoration Project.

Two more businesses have started a design process and will see a restored storefront by the end of January.

One of the City's historic districts, the 82nd Street Partnership of Jackson Heights, celebrated its 20th anniversary as a landmark district and hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony earlier this month to celebrate the small businesses with restored storefronts.



The 82nd Street Partnership gathered with community members to celebrate the restored storefronts of five businesses in Jackson Heights.

To commemorate the new store fronts, Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras (D-East Elmhurst), Commissioner Robert Walsh from the Dept. of Small Business Services, along with representatives from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Jackson Heights Beautification Group and representatives from Community Board 3 were present.

Seth Taylor, executive director of the 82nd Street Partnership, said the Storefront Restoration Project aims to improve Jackson Heights' quality of life, preserve retail diversity and improve business conditions by restoring building facades and enhancing the district's sense of place.

"These are mom and pop shops who needed assistance in order to improve their storefronts, so we're able to help them through a grant program provided by the City of New York," Taylor said. "We installed new signs, new store windows, new roll-down gates and upgraded the look of their storefronts with the hopes of retaining and expanding their customer base."

The Storefront Restoration Program was made possible through a grant the business improvement district won from the Dept. of Small Business Services' initiative known as the Neighborhood Challenge in

2013. Through the Neighborhood Challenge, SBS hopes to encourage innovation and creativity in local economic development programming.

The \$50,000 Neighborhood Challenge investment has leveraged more than \$150,000 in private investment, for a total investment of approximately \$200,000 going toward 82nd Street's small business storefronts, according to Taylor.

The BID provided the businesses with free design assistance and offered them a matching construction grant, Taylor said.

"Eighty-Second Street has some of the best old neo-Tudor architectural designs in the City, but over the years, a number of businesses have had a difficult time compiling with the LPC's design guidelines, so we wanted to restore some of the historical fabric of the neighborhood," Taylor said.

Sonia Guzman, owner of Sagitario Bakery, located at 82-01 Roosevelt Ave., said she is very lucky to have a restored store front.

"Now it's a different look," Guzman said. "The customers like the new look [and] now I have more space."

Taylor said every business in the district had an opportunity to apply and the businesses that did participate, really appreciated the investment that was made, especially during the holidays, because it gave them a new "look and feel."

"It's really about preserving and enhancing the neighborhood's sense of place as a historic district with diverse retail and great local businesses," Taylor added.