

Jackson Heights-Corona BID shows potential for a cleaner, safer Roosevelt Avenue

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Roosevelt Avenue

There has been conflicting opinion on the new proposal for the Business Improvement District (BID) along Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights-Corona. This portion of Roosevelt Avenue is one of New York's most immigrant-rich communities, and lays claim to hundreds of Latino-owned small businesses. It is actually the most culturally diverse zip-code in the entire county. The eclectic mom-and-pop stores and street vendors combined with the high volume of foot and vehicle traffic come together to make Roosevelt Avenue home to the most culturally dense area in New York.

The new BID proposal is giving the community the chance to make the already hustling retail corridor even better. Although this portion of Roosevelt Avenue is known to be culturally inviting, it has also been experiencing excessive trash, disorganization and a spike in violent crime. The BID proposes several improvements for the area in hopes to alleviate these issues and help the current businesses grow.

According to the 82nd Street Partnership, which has been advocating the BID, the BID will incorporate a joint effort between the Department of Sanitation, Parks & Recreation, Department of Transportation, Consumer Affairs, Department of Health and the NYPD. It will be funded by the tax dollars of the property owners along portions of Roosevelt Avenue (between 81st and 104th Streets), as well as a small portion of 37th Avenue (between 81st and 83rd Streets). The budget for the project

has recently been lowered to \$860,000 per year from the initially estimated \$1,000,000 per year. Property owners and commercial tenants will pay their portion according to the property assessment. The increase amounts to a nominal average per tenant of about \$75/month, or \$2.50/day, the price of a cup of coffee and a donut. As minuscule as the increase may seem it has still caused some controversy with property owners and business owners claiming that this small increase in expenses can make a big difference in their income. Others see it as opportunity to pay the city to help maintain their property rather than paying their own employees extra to do it.

The BID will not only help to clean up the busy streets but it will also implement new active public places throughout the area, neighborhood events i.e. street fairs, festivals and cultural events, holiday lights and other amenities which will be designed to help promote the shopping experience. Public spaces will be improved to include such amenities as bike racks, additional trash receptacles and more efficient street lights, as well as more attractive planting and flowers throughout the area.

Initially locals challenged the BID because they felt it threatened the existing affordable shops paving way for national tenants to come in and put the small business owner out of business and others believe the cultural feel of the community would soon become non-existent. It seems as though the plan laid witness to much misinterpretation due to a sense of pride within the community. However there is no intention of the plan to change the neighborhood in any way, it is simply a way to make the community feel safer and help clean up the area making it more attractive to locals, visitors and tourists. Ultimately, if people feel threatened by crime and are turned off by the lack of cleanliness in the area, they will choose to shop somewhere else. This plan will make the existing businesses more competitive to the more modern retail stores, ultimately increasing the value in the area. From a real estate standpoint, the BID is a great way for property owners to gain more value and make themselves more competitive with other retail corridors throughout the city.

According to a recent press release, the Jackson Heights–Corona Business Improvement District is continuing to petition and has gained upwards of 1,200 supporters in signatures and ballots and is still growing.