

Proposed Roosevelt BID reduces size and cost

by Andrew Pavia

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Rendering of what a BID could potentially do for Roosevelt Avenue.

The proposed business improvement district (BID) for Roosevelt Avenue has decreased in size and proponents have announced a lower estimated tax assessment for business owners to fund the BID.

The proposed BID, an expansion of the 82nd Street Partnership, would include roughly 850 businesses along Roosevelt Avenue, has met with some opposition from some small business owners who would be included.

Under the original plan, the BID would stretch from 82nd to 114th Street making it one of the largest BID's in the city. However, officials have announced that the new proposal would trim 10 blocks off and only extend to 104th Street.

In addition to the change in size, the new estimated cost for business owners is \$900 a year. The actual number that business will have to pay will vary based on an equation that includes the size of their storefront and the assessed value of the property.

The new figure comes on the heels of the reduction in the BID's budget from \$1.7 million down to \$860,000.

"By ending the boundaries at 104th Street we're able to then reduce the budget," said Seth Taylor, executive director of the 82nd Street Partnership. "Which at the end of the day makes this a better proposal because it's more affordable and more manageable."

The BID would provide services like additional garbage collection, graffiti cleanup, increased lighting and marketing for the businesses within the district.

Small business owners held a rally last month protesting the BID, largely because they did not want to have to pay the tax assessment that funds the group.

In response, proponents of the BID are reaching out to those business owners that have expressed concern with the plan.

"I'm always open to meet with them and I've been talking with them," said Judith Garcia who has owned a real estate business on Roosevelt Avenue since 1968. "Some of the information is very confusing."

Although she would discuss the proposal with officials, she said, "I refuse to pay for something that I'm already paying for. I feel abused, violated and that there is no justice."

Another issue is that the large number of street vendors along Roosevelt Avenue will benefit from the BID's services, but since they don't actually own or rent property, they won't have to pay the assessment.

"I think we're one of the first BID's that's trying to find a way to find some solutions and mitigate some of these tensions," Taylor said of the animosity between traditional restaurants and the vendors.

Small businesses are also concerned that they will be priced out, making way for chain stores to move in. However, Taylor says that won't be the case.

"On 82nd Street we've had a BID for almost a quarter of a century, and almost 75 percent of ground floor business are small mom-and-pop businesses," he said.

Taylor has worked on creating business improvement districts in Brooklyn and Manhattan, and said there is always a lot of concern when the idea is first proposed.

"In my experience working with BIDs, you always have property owners who are vehemently opposed to this plan because they see it as a tax," he said. "And once the BID is running, they say, 'You know what? This is a good investment.'"