

## Neighborhood groups win grant money to improve local landscapes

New York City handed out \$250,000 in grants to seven community-based Business Improvement Districts to spur change.

BY JASON SHEFTELL / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS  
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BRYANT PARK CORPORATION

**DUMBO hopes a firepit like this one in Bryant Park will ignite community.**

Every neighborhood has an eyesore. A park that could look better. A dark underpass. Hideous retail signage. In a BID Challenge, the city has handed out \$250,000 in grants to seven community-based "Business Improvement Districts" to spur creativity.

It's an effort by the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) to help the improvement districts, or BIDs, focus on a single important change.

"No one knows these neighborhoods better, so you can be sure the money will be allocated to where it is most needed," said Deputy Mayor Robert Steel.

According to SBS Commissioner Rob Walsh, who thought up the creative challenge, the entries were meant to be out of the box.

"We really wanted to have these BIDs push the envelope," said Walsh. "These ideas are meant to significantly improve these neighborhoods."

Here are the seven winners and the amounts of their grants.



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The HUB, The Bronx.



### **Fordham Rd., The Bronx \$26,000**

A strip of asphalt and 1970s industrial lights, Fordham Plaza is a blank canvas — but also the third-largest shopping district in the city. The BID proposed a summer movie series that would turn the empty land into an evening cinema. The money will fund this summer's films and a sanitation crew to clean it up.



JEFF BACHNER FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

This DUMBO underpass could get an eco-friendly firepit.

### **DUMBO, Brooklyn, \$20,000**

DUMBO is a near-perfect neighborhood, but local BID leaders want to build on the influx of high-tech companies. The plan is to create an interactive art installation for tourists — and even an eco-friendly firepit.



MARIELA LOMBARD FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Southern Blvd., The Bronx.

### **Southern Blvd., The Bronx \$28,000**

Southern Blvd. has mom-and-pop shops mixed with giant chains. McDonald's can be next to a hip-hop clothing boutique. The problem is communication. Some business owners don't have websites and are light years behind in social media strategies.

"They know their customers, they know the merchandise, they have a great location, but they lack in advertising and promotions," said Medina Sadiq, executive director of the Southern Boulevard BID. "We asked business owners if they would use a website if they could get them at no cost, and they all said they would." The money will go to good use. Over 10% of area businesses will soon have a Web and social media presence.



CHRISTIE M. FARRIELLA FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

A shop in the Jackson Heights/Elmhurst area of Queens.

### **Jackson Heights/Elmhurst, Queens, \$50,000**

The crowded retail corridor on 82nd St. has a healthy stock of historic buildings, but shop and building owners are some of the least compliant in the city at obeying rules for signage and building care. As a result, the BID will spend its grant money to establish architectural improvement programs to refurbish these grand structures.



ERIC GALIPO

A rendering of Atlantic Ave.'s pedestrian "Funderpass," a multimedia under-highway site.

### **Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, \$75,000**

The underpass dividing Brooklyn Heights from Brooklyn Bridge Park looks like it's out of a movie about 1970s New York. With \$75,000, the Atlantic Ave. BID will transform the space into something called "Funderpass" that will bring lighting, maps, a bike-share program, artwork and interactive features.