

Quinn's Five Borough Economic Development Tour

by Andrew Shilling
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Speaker Christine Quinn toured the city on her Five Borough Economic Development Tour last week, and one of the stops on her daylong expedition was at the 82nd Street Partnership business district in Jackson Heights.

The mayoral candidate joined the current 82nd Street Partnership, a business improvement district (BID) in the area since 1990, and local businesses to discuss what needed to be improved and discuss a plan for a newer, expanded Jackson Heights-Corona BID.



Seth Taylor, executive director of the 82nd Street Partnership, says the community would benefit from the expanded BID, proposed to stretch from 82nd Street along Roosevelt Avenue to Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

“Roosevelt Avenue is a thriving retail commercial corridor and there’s a lot of retail activity out there, but there’s still lots of opportunity for improvement,” Taylor said. “We want to make Roosevelt Avenue

a cleaner and more inviting place for people to come and shop and operate.”

A new bid would have an annual budget of \$1.1 million, costing owners an average of \$2,000 per year, according to a Crain’s New York Business report.

Taylor said the new BID could bring revitalized public plazas, graffiti-removal initiatives, and updated streetscapes, as well as provide a platform for a community voice on issues hurting business growth neighborhood.

“We want to promote the corridor for visitors and make sure it’s a wonderful corridor for area residents as well,” he said. “It’s all about working with the business community to promote this growth.”

Quinn and Taylor walked the current 82nd Street Partnership BID near Roosevelt Avenue and met with several shop owners to get a feel for the types of improvements that would promote development.

Majed Elmoneim, owner of Joyeria Salma’s Jewelry at 40-40 82nd St., has been in charge of the store for eight years and said his main concern is the amount of regulations placed on small

business owners and frequent harassment from inspectors.

“They could work out a plan to contest fines,” Elmoneim said of the city. “There are too many regulations, and we are busy trying to take care of customers and trying to keep our business afloat.”

Araceli Bastida, a representative of Sonrisas Sanas’ dental office just up the block at 40–14 82nd St., agreed there are tough regulations, however she said the main source of the problem along their block, aside from prostitution and evening muggings, is “foot vendors” undercutting regulations already in place.

“It’s unfair competition where we have to bear the taxes,” Bastida said. “We’re all regulated by some sort of agency and their not, and all the problems that come with that.”

While regulations have often been a problem, Bastida said this is a case where there needs to be more guidelines, as these types of businesses are typically “engaged in illegal activity.”

Quinn suggested coordinating efforts with the 110th and bordering 115th precincts to add additional patrol and close the gap on these issues in the region.

“That can sometimes be a little tricky with streets that are on the dividing line,” Quinn said. “That’s something we could work with [Councilwoman] Julissa [Ferrerias] on to try to get some better coordination from the precincts.”

As Quinn made her way through the neighborhood, it became apparent there is more room for improvement.

“Every one of our communities is uniquely positioned to seize new opportunities for economic growth,” Quinn said. “It’s the people of our great city who represent the key ingredient in each of the communities I am visiting.”

In Long Island City, Quinn proposed low-cost office space for homegrown tech companies, increased public transit service, and promoted tech job development with CUNY and the Coalition for Queens.

Her tour also stopped by the Brooklyn Navy Yard to propose the dedication of 9 million square feet of city-owned space for industrial jobs, eliminate sales tax for smaller manufacturing companies and convert 500,000 square feet of vacant space at the Brooklyn Army Terminal to promote smaller manufacturing companies.

“By offering tools and support for businesses, and developing new skills for our workers, we can strengthen our local economies and truly support our middle class,” she said. “I have the plan to make this vision become a reality.”