

Roosevelt Avenue gets business-savvy

City's longest BID to allocate \$1M budget to clean, bright streets



RENDERINGS AND PHOTO COURTESY 82ND STREET PARTNERSHIP

The 82nd Street Partnership plans to plant trees and add seating to many No. 7 train entrances along Roosevelt Avenue from 82nd to 114th streets as part of an expanded Business Improvement District plan.

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by Josey Bartlett, Editor

Jackson Heights leaders talked cleaner streets and a strong voice for its expanded Business Improvement District at a town hall meeting last Wednesday.

The BID, which would run down Roosevelt Avenue from 82nd to 114th streets and a few blocks of Junction Boulevard, would have an annual budget of \$1.1 million with each property required to pay, on average, about \$2,000 per year. The fee is not yet set in stone.

"The more properties and businesses will drive down the cost so it's more affordable and secondly the idea is that more participants will build a stronger voice," said 82nd Street Partnership Executive Director Seth Taylor. The partnership will be the private administrator of the proposed BID.

The Jackson Heights district will be the longest of the city's 67 BIDs, which have budgets ranging from \$57,000 up to \$16 million.

In return for the fees the businesses would see increased sanitation services, beautification and advertising.

The 82nd Street Partnership plans to collect ballots this summer and send the final proposal to the Department of Small Business Services in the fall. After the SBA it goes to the City Council for a vote with a hope for implementation in early 2014.

"Having spent my entire life living on and around Roosevelt Avenue, I have always been aware of how much traffic it receives by motorists and pedestrians alike," Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras (D-Corona) said. "Because of this, I really felt there were several improvements we could make that would provide our local business owners with more resources."

Ferreras announced the BID plan as part of her "New Deal" \$2 million project to clean up the avenue in late March.

The current BID, administered by the 82nd Street Partnership, runs just two blocks on either side of Roosevelt Avenue on 82nd Street. Businesses there have a designated "Clean Team" that have removed 900 graffiti tags and emptied about 600,000 pounds of trash. It secured \$235,000 to clean up Dunningham Triangle, which went from an overgrown swath of land with trash and debris to a neat green space with seating around it.

Greening the avenue will be a big part of the BID's mission. In the expanded BID area the partnership hopes to add seating and plantings to the entrances to the No. 7 train stations.

"We will also put pressure on and work with the DOT to clean under the elevated tracks," Taylor said.

Another unique component of the avenue and part of the BID's work would be to collaborate with the many legal street vendors. The current BID has begun talks with Make the Road New York, Ferreras' office and the Street Vendor Project to educate vendors on the rules. The vendors will not pay the BID fee, but making an environment where vendors and businesses coexist will benefit the brick-and-mortar establishments, according to Taylor.

"There are vendors playing by the rules, but they are overshadowed by the bad," Taylor said. "We want to try to change that perception to improve conditions."

In the last year the partnership added bike racks to 82nd Street and started a project to restore a historic district between Roosevelt and 37th Avenue to its Tudor-design aesthetic in keeping with Landmark Preservation rules. Projects like that could extend down the avenue.

Events will also be a core mission of the BID. The first annual Viva la Comida Festival, co-hosted by the partnership, attracted thousands of people last year. The second annual festival is planned for late September.

"As a mom-and-pop shop, we need all the support we can get to bring more customers and foot traffic to the area," said Ruben Dario Ramirez, owner of Liberia El Dorado.

CORRECTION

This article was corrected to say that \$2,000 would be the average assessment on properties in the BID.