

# **Flatbush Ave RID**

**Flatbush Avenue from Parkside Avenue to Cortelyou Road**

## **FY 2014 Annual Report**

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### **WHAT IS A BID?**

*The city has 70 business improvement districts and each property within the district pays an annual tax assessment which the City collects and forwards to the BIDs twice a year; the BIDs then spend the assessment on services, such as supplemental sanitation, security, marketing, and business development, that support the property owners and their commercial tenants. Membership is automatic for everyone owning property or a business located within the BID's boundaries.*

### **ABOUT THE FLATBUSH AVENUE BID**

The Flatbush Avenue BID runs along Flatbush Avenue from Parkside Avenue to Cortelyou Road and has an annual assessment of \$314,520 which the BID supplemented in Fiscal Year 2014 with an additional grant from Councilmember Eugene. Total membership is approximately 250 members (property owners and businesses). We run on a fiscal year from July 1 to June 30 (this annual report covers the period from July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014).

### **SERVICES**

#### **Advocacy and Business Development**

The BID advocates on behalf of Flatbush Avenue's businesses and the neighborhood beyond the shopping district on various issues:

- Ongoing discussions with the 70th Precinct on improving safety for our businesses, their employees, shoppers, and residents.
- Facilitating interactions between the BID's businesses and government agencies such as reaching out to the Dept. of Transportation regarding changes in traffic patterns and parking rules along Flatbush Avenue.
- Testifying and advocating on behalf of small businesses, including submitting testimony to the City Council urging a reasonable alternative to their policy of first offense ticketing for non-dangerous violations.

### **Filling Vacancies**

The BID has begun tracking vacant properties and reaching out to property owners to discuss filling vacancies with appropriate tenants. Our Deputy Executive Director who joined us in the second half of FY14 was formerly the Director of Retail Attraction for the Jamaica Center BID and comes to us with connections that will be valuable.

### **Holidays**

Holidays on Flatbush Avenue include **holiday lights** over the Avenue which went up the week before Thanksgiving 2013, a **tree lighting** in the yard of the Flatbush Reformed Church.

Additional celebrations were:

- The BID's biggest way it gives back to the community during this time of year is by sponsoring the annual **Thanksgiving Lunch** at the Flatbush Reformed Church, started years ago by the BID's late Executive Director, Jack Katz, in partnership with the Church's former pastor and ID Board member, Reverend Dan Ramm, and volunteers from the 70th Precinct.
- The BID also provides piles of toys for local **toy drives** organized by Councilmember Mathieu Eugene and by the 70th Precinct Community Council. In Dec. 2013, we were able to supplement this by securing the donation of 1,040 free vouchers to Disney on Ice and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus from Feld Entertainment; the vouchers were distributed to eager families at the above events.

### **Marketing the District to Shoppers**

The BID produces and distributes a variety of print promotional items and engages in online promotion, including our website and Facebook, as well as special events reaching thousands of people.

Some marketing highlights for Fiscal Year 14:

- The **Flatbush Avenue Street Fair**, held on June 29, 2014, is a huge event in this part of Brooklyn. We tweaked it this year by adding a targeted postcard mailing to our print, TV, and online promotion, and continued several features from prior years including giving away tickets for kids' rides and arranging special activities including pony rides, magician, balloon twister, stilt walker, and a strolling RaRa band. We also had three sponsors (Affinity Health Plan, HealthPlus Amerigroup, and Fidelis) and hope to add a

media sponsor for next year.

- After months of redesign, the BID launched Phase 1 of its **new website** ([www.flatbushavebid.com](http://www.flatbushavebid.com)), designed by Stislow Design, in Feb. 2014. The website is designed to be user friendly and structured for easy updating so information can be kept current by BID staff. In June of 2014, the BID created a **Facebook page** ([www.facebook.com/FlatbushAveBID](http://www.facebook.com/FlatbushAveBID)) which it updates regularly.
- Designer John Stislow also helped us create **Flatbush Avenue BID tote bags**, 5,000 of which are currently being printed at a Brooklyn manufacturer and will be distributed to in the spring of 2015.
- Make Music NY is an **annual concert series** staged throughout the city on the first day of summer. We worked with the Flatbush Caton Market to promote a concert in their large sidewalk plaza. In addition to a Panamanian drum corp, the concert presented dance from Ballet Folklorico Nuestro Panama, a DJ, and live music from several groups and played to a packed crowd. The BID took photos and video which we used to promote it after the fact.

### **Neighborhood Beautification and Streetscaping**

- In addition to Ignacio, Tirso, and Basilico (our supplemental sanitation team from Atlantic Maintenance) who work seven days a week, seven hours a day **sweeping, picking up trash, and removing snow and excess rain water**, the company does an **monthly graffiti clean-ups** ten months of the year. **Councilmember Mathieu Eugene provided a \$5,000 grant** to offset the cost of this essential service.
- The BID installs seasonal **banners** on lampposts year-round.
- The Board and BID members have expressed interest in the possibility of adding **public toilets, benches, additional lighting, and the possibility of a zoning change** so BID staff are exploring the feasibility of these items.

### **Outreach**

- The BID's Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, and former Consultant went **door to door** for the second half of the fiscal year trying to make contact with as many BID members as possible. The BID also held a **Feb. 6, 2014 Merchants' Meeting** at Flatbush Reformed Church and **May 13, 2014 Annual Meeting** at NY Congregational Home which provided opportunities for businesses and property owners to connect with BID services.
- The organization developed an **in-depth study of the Avenue's businesses and shoppers** which is being conducted by Pratt Center for Community Development, collecting a variety of useful data, from identifying what would attract shoppers to spend more time on Flatbush Avenue to evaluating current building conditions. The collected data (to be released in a report at the end of the 2014 calendar year) will be invaluable to the BID in determining the strategies, grants, and business programs that will be most

beneficial to the District and its members.

### **Safety**

For over two decades, the BID has hired security guards Lester and Luis to patrol the BID. The BID also is in frequent contact with the 70th Precinct, participating in the **bi-annual BID meeting with Brooklyn South** and the **70th Precinct Community Council meetings**.

## **CHALLENGES AND KEY PRIORITIES FOR FY15**

### **Challenges**

The main challenge for the BID was and is regrouping after the loss of the organization's Executive Director of 22 years, Jack Katz, in Nov. 2012. The Flatbush Development Corp. and Board members filled in to manage the BID in the interim year and new management took over in December of 2013 (halfway through Fiscal Year 2014). While the new Executive Director is familiar with the neighborhood and needs of our businesses through her three years spent managing the adjacent Church Avenue BID, there are still adjustments as the BID updates and streamline its procedures, evaluates which BID policies were effective and which could be replaced by even more beneficial programs, and gathers information through a needs analysis conducted by Pratt Center for Community Development to help guide the BID in the coming years. The BID is also in discussion with Lawyers Alliance to provide pro bono legal assistance in reviewing the BID's governing documents.

### **Key Priorities for FY15**

1. **Recruit additional Board members:** The Board has not been operating at full capacity but has several new, enthusiastic Board members guiding the BID. We will strive to continue to fill the Board with property owners and commercial tenants dedicated to guiding the Flatbush Avenue BID to a great future.

2. **Fill vacancies and begin reversing this trend:** Filling vacancies is a high priority for the BID. We have noted the number of free spaces and in 2014 (as part of our study conducted by Pratt Center for Community Development), we've been cataloguing vacant storefronts. The BID's Deputy Executive Director, Katie Mirkin, was formerly the Director of Retail and Economic Development with the Jamaica Center BID where she implemented strategies to attract commercial and residential real estate investors, lenders, office tenants, retailers and restaurants, and residents to Downtown Jamaica. We hope to tap into the relationships she formed in her past position and create materials to market these empty spaces. We also have recruited two Board members (Chair Ezra Ashkanazi and Board candidate Marcus Jankie) who are in real estate and who we will be working with as we formulate our retail attraction strategy.

3. **Facilitate improvements to Flatbush Avenue's storefronts:** The adjacent Church Avenue BID (managed by the same team that manages the Flatbush Avenue BID) has been awarded two NY Main Street grants for storefront restoration and we have seen the remarkable outcomes of this program which reimburses eligible property owners and commercial tenants for

up to 75% of the cost of their storefront restoration. Part of the Pratt study mentioned above surveyed existing building condition and will provide the BID with addresses so the BID can develop programs to assist property owners and businesses in implementing building improvements.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

### **Organizational Changes**

In Dec. 2013, Executive Director Lauren Elvers Collins took on management of the Flatbush Avenue BID after three years running the adjacent Church Avenue BID which she continues to manage. Under this agreement, the two BIDs remain separate entities; however, they are able to take advantage of reduced administrative costs, shared resources, and increased negotiating power and leverage. Each BID retains a separate budget and separate Board of Directors. Both the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director serve both organizations. Local nonprofit CAMBA provides back office support (Legal, Fiscal, Technology, and HR, as well as office space and equipment and benefits) for an annual fee.

### **Board of Directors**

During the challenging year in between permanent Executive Directors (from Nov. 2012 to Nov. 2013), the Board disbanded with the exception of dedicated Board members Voltan Bagot and Rev. Dan Ramm. Recruitment efforts were aggressive and by the May 2014 Board meeting, four additional property owners and one commercial tenant were voted onto the Board. Our Board of Directors is made up of five categories: Property Owners (max of seven), Commercial Tenants (max of one), Residential Tenants (max of one), Elected Officials (max of four), Non-Voting Members (max of one). Currently, we have two vacancies in the Property Owner category, one in the Residential Tenant category, and one in the Non-Voting member category. The Board is comprised of:

- Ezra Ashkanazi (Chair), Ash Management
- Voltan Bagot, Globe Electronics
- Mildred Ballenilla, Astoria Bank
- Rev. Cheri Kroon, Flatbush Reformed Church
- Ogbanna Obi, Capital One
- Alternate for Mr. Obi: Aisha Pluviose, Capital One
- Honorable Bill de Blasio, Mayor of New York City (represented by Mahadya Mary of the Dept. of Small Business Services)
- Honorable Scott Stringer, NYC Comptroller (represented by Cory Provost)
- Honorable Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President (represented by Eileen Mullaney-Newman)
- Honorable Mathieu Eugene, NYC Councilmember, 40<sup>th</sup> District (represented by David Suarez)

### **Staff**

Lauren Elvers Collins, Executive Director  
Katie Mirkin, Deputy Executive Director  
Melissa Skolnick, Consultant

## **Interns**

The BID supplements its staff by recruiting interns, focusing on bringing on interns with a genuine interest in expanding their knowledge and gaining hands-on experience in business development and nonprofits. Intern in FY2014 was Erika Finnikin.

## **Continuing Education**

BID staff supplemented their hands-on knowledge by participating in the following workshops and committees: International Downtown Association Conference (IDA), Measuring Organizational Output (Dept. of Small Business Services), Economic Development Breakfast (Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce), Strategic Planning Workshop (Dept. of Small Business Services), BID Association Mentoring Committee consultation (BID Assn. Mentoring Committee); Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams' Small Business Transition Team (Brooklyn Borough President)

## **Thank you to our funders, sponsors, and supporters in FY14!**

70th Precinct, 70th Precinct Community Council, and 70th Precinct Explorers

Affinity Health Plan

Astoria Bank

Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Jason Bouchard

CAMBA

Capital One

Carver Federal Savings Bank

Community Board 14

Ditmas Park Corner

Councilmember Mathieu Eugene

Feld Entertainment

Fidelis

Flatbush Caton Market

Flatbush Development Corporation

Flatbush Reformed Church

HealthPlus Amerigroup

Edgar Henry

Kings Theatre

Meteor Festivals

James Mettham

NYC Dept. Of Small Business Services

NYC Dept. of Transportation

Pratt Center for Community Development

Rev. Dan Ramm

David Shannon Florist and Nursery

Stislow Design

## FINANCES

**Total Support & Revenue (FY14): \$327,541**

**Total Expenses (FY 14): \$314,198**

**Current Reserve (at end of FY 14): \$147,692**

**Assessment Revenue: \$314,520**

**Contributions (FY14): \$12,399**

- **Fundraising/Special Events: \$12,399**
- **General: \$0**
- **Grants: \$0**
- **In-kind: \$0**
- **Other: \$0**

**Program Service Revenue: \$0**

- **Banners: \$0**
- **Plazas (licenses, concessions): \$0**
- **Special contracts: \$0**
- **Other: \$0**

**Other Income (FY14): \$621**

- **Interest Income: \$621**
- **Investment income: \$0**
- **Other: \$0**

**Total Support & Revenue (FY14): \$327,541**



**General & Administrative Expenses (FY14): \$98,145**

- **Salaries (executive, staff, payroll taxes, benefits): \$46,735**
- **Outside Contractors: \$11,400**
- **Insurance: \$1,974**
- **Rent & Utilities: \$8,284**
- **Supplies & Equipment: \$50**
- **Other (Administrative, audit, payroll processing, equipment & misc.): \$39,702**

**Program Expenses (FY14): \$203,563**

- **Sanitation: \$95,169**
- **Safety & Security: \$44,398**
- **Streetscape/Beautification: \$0**
- **Marketing & Communications/Public Events (not including holiday lights): \$22,611**
- **Holiday Lights: \$15,725**
- **Business Capacity-Building: \$0**
- **Special Programs: \$0**
- **Other: \$25,660**

**Additional Expenses: \$488**

- **Capital improvement costs: \$0**
- **Debt service payments: \$0**
- **Other (Depreciation): \$488**

**Total Expenses: \$302,197**