

# SBS IN THE NEWS



## Fulton Street BID officially launched

by Daniel Bush  
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Fulton Street will have a new look this holiday season, supported for the first time by a Business Improvement District three years in the making.

Shoppers can expect banners, holiday lighting, increased security, and other amenities along Fulton Street between Rockwell Place and Classon Avenue in the newly formed Fulton Area Business Improvement District (BID).

They can also expect a number of angry small business owners along the strip, people who vehemently opposed the BID and continue to do so, despite its creation. (BID's levy special taxes on property owners to pay for improvements.)

Any lingering ill feeling over the project was swept aside, at least for one day, as Pratt Area Community Council(PACC), city officials, and supportive business owners celebrated the BID at an October 14th launch party.

"After many years, we're happy to finally launch the BID and begin providing much needed services and support for our local businesses," said Wellington Sharpe, the BID's interim director.

Deb Howard, PACC's executive director, said the BID would help pay for beautification efforts, a marketing campaign, and updated website, which goes live at the end of this month. "We're very excited to finally get started," Howard said.

The Fulton Street BID joins New York's network of 64 business improvement districts, the most of any city in the country.

BID's generated over \$100 million in revenue and employed approximately 900 workers in 2008, according to the city's Department of Small Business Services (SBS).

In an email, Laura Postiglione, an SBS spokesperson, said the Fulton Street BID would bolster business in Fort Greene and Clinton Hill.

"The BID has a strong marketing and outreach campaign," said Postiglione, "so SBS expects that this will attract more people to the area."

Storeowners invited to the launch party were optimistic the BID would help.

"When you want something to be better sometimes you need to make an investment," said Erica Devaux, of the Brooklyn Cares Pet Clinic, at 944 Fulton Street. "We're excited."

George Williams, who works for the non-profit arts organization BRIC, said paying the sliding BID tax - based on a store's Fulton Street frontage space - is "definitely worth it."

"You get what you pay for," Williams said. "Anything to bring more attention to the area."

Statistics show BID's have a positive long-term impact on business communities. Nevertheless the project has sparked a fierce debate, one that shows little signs of simmering down even now that the BID is in place.

In a letter to SBS Commissioner Robert Walsh, a leading opponent of the plan said the improvement district would hurt longtime shop owners who are unable to pay the tax, and are uninterested in the expected benefits it brings.

"We are not interested in the frivolous amenities the [BID] wants to spend our money on," wrote Rocky Widdi, whose family owns Met Supermarket, among the largest stores in the BID. "We are very unhappy."

Councilwoman Letitia James addressed these concerns in a speech at the BID launch. James, who secured \$400,000 for the BID, has been criticized heavily for her support of the project.

James said over time the BID would help all store owners, big and small alike. "The evidence is clear that BID's have been a positive draw to businesses all throughout the city of New York," James said.