

# Best Practice: The Revitalization of Myrtle Avenue

One of the most successful Avenue NYC-funded organizations is the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project Local Development Corporation (MARP).

In the 1990s, Myrtle Avenue (between Flatbush and Classon Avenues), the main commercial corridor for Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, had fallen into severe disrepair. MARP was formed in 1999 to revitalize the avenue and restore it to a bustling, economically viable corridor.

## MARP faced a number of challenges in 1999:

- Storefront vacancy rate over 20%
- High crime rate (Myrtle Avenue was commonly referred to as “Murder Avenue”)
- Graffiti and trash lining the street
- Poor lighting
- Deteriorating building infrastructure
- Relatively light foot traffic
- Upstairs apartments in disrepair
- Lack of diversity in retail goods and services



*Myrtle Avenue in the 1990s*

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## MARP's strategies for transforming the avenue

- **Strong leadership:** Dynamic and engaged executive director and staff; all full-time staff are trained urban planners
- **Leveraging funds outside the City:** In addition to Avenue NYC funding, MARP aggressively pursued grants from NY State, banks and foundations
- **Cohesive vision:** Organized merchants and property owners around a cohesive vision and strategy for the future of the avenue
- **Creative business attraction strategies:** Employed such tactics as "Rolling Up the Gates," an event where property owners come together to display their available storefronts
- **Partnering with local institution:** Worked closely with the nearby Pratt Institute, actively involving them in revitalizing the avenue
- **Streetscape improvements:** Made the avenue more physically attractive by investing in lighting fixtures, trees, additional sanitation services and graffiti removal
- **Recruiting a diverse mix of new businesses:** Made a targeted effort to bring Brooklyn-based retailers and first-time entrepreneurs to fill gaps in the retail mix

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## 2010: A healthy and vibrant commercial corridor

Myrtle Avenue has undergone a dramatic transformation; the street is now a vibrant, bustling mix of thriving businesses and new development.

- In 2005, the **Myrtle Avenue BID** was formed to provide supplemental sanitation and security services
- Since 2006, the **storefront vacancy rate** has been between **7 and 12%**
- Approximately **150 merchants** now line the avenue
- **97%** of the stores are locally owned and **78%** are minority or women-owned
- **Primary retail anchors** are the Associated Supermarket, Pratt Art Supply Store and a U.S. Post Office
- **Three national chains**, Walgreen's, Subway and Domino's Pizza, have opened
- **Five new development projects** are currently underway
- **Crime** is down **more than 26%**, hitting an all-time low in 2009



# New Initiative: Building the Capacity of Nonprofit Organizations

In FY11, SBS will help more economic development organizations replicate the successes of Myrtle Avenue by investing an additional \$500,000 of funding in capacity-building services. These services will expand upon our existing commercial revitalization program, ensuring that more of New York City's commercial districts are vibrant places to live, work and do business.

## Services

- **Providing** workshops and one-on-one technical assistance in basic nonprofit management
- **Developing** and **providing** workshops focused on commercial revitalization
- **Helping** organizations develop effective business attraction strategies
- **Creating** a website to facilitate information and best practice sharing
- **Connecting** organizations to the Fund for the City of New York's cost-saving services for nonprofits
- **Developing** partnerships with academic institutions and national nonprofits
- **Building** relationships with foundations and banks to encourage more investment in commercial revitalization

