



Red Hook's Commercial Stretch Hopes To Build Up Its Foot Traffic

By: Jeanine Ramirez



More than three months after Hurricane Sandy hit, the main business district in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn is still trying to rebound, and merchants hope city relief grants and the reopening of the local Fairway market can help drive up sales. Borough reporter Jeanine Ramirez filed the following report.

The Red Hook wine shop Botta di Vino reopened just two weeks ago, about three months after Hurricane Sandy shut it down.

"We saved our wine which was like, whoa," said Triciann Botta, the wine store's owner. "We lifted up the wine high enough that we didn't lose any inventory but the damage was done in the cellar and the cellar had to be redone."

Botta di Vino is one of the retailers featured in a Department of Small Business Services campaign designed to draw shoppers into impacted neighborhoods.

"We are up and running and we're back on our feet. And we're now just waiting for customers to come in," Botta said.

The store is located on Red Hook's main commercial corridor, Van Brundt Street, where many shops are still shuttered.

On Tuesday, the Small Business Services Commissioner Rob Walsh took NY1 on a tour along the struggling strip.

"We're taking a storefront by storefront, block by block approach to Red Hook," Walsh said.

While on the tour, Walsh told St. John Frizell, the owner of Fort Defiance Cafe and Bar, that he will be getting a \$5,000 grant from the city. It is one of 200 grants being given out to shop owners to help with repairs.

"The good news is we'll start cutting those checks either later this week or early next week to get out to the many small businesses that need them," said Walsh.

Local business owners all agreed what they also need is foot traffic, and they hope that will

come with the reopening of the Fairway Market at the foot of Van Brundt Street. The 40,000-square-foot store employs 350 people and has attracted thousands of shoppers daily since it opened seven years ago.

"Fairway not being open is a huge factor in this neighborhood," said St. John Frizell, Fort Defiance's owner.

NY1 stopped by Fairway to check on its progress. Shelves were being restocked, light fixtures were installed and registers were set up. After being totally gutted out, plans are to reopen the store on March 1.

"Its going to be a great combination of events. The Fairway opens, spring is happening at the same time, it's warming up a little bit. I think Red Hook is ready to make a full comeback," Frizell said.

Shoppers will also be a welcoming sight.