



Sandy-Hit Stores Get \$1M Clean-Up Fund

BY ADRIANNE PASQUARELLI



The newly renovated Station Wine and Liquor in the Rockaways.

More help for retail businesses damaged by Sandy is on the way. The city is rolling out a Small Business Storefront Improvement Program that will provide businesses in hard-hit neighborhoods across the five boroughs with money to help repair their storm-damaged storefronts.

The initiative, funded by the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and supported by the city's Department of Small Business Services, will provide grants of up to \$20,000 each to

qualifying businesses. According to a SBS spokeswoman, the program has up to \$1 million to dedicate to renovations, and can assist about 50 businesses.

"The Small Business Storefront Improvement Program is one more way the city is helping small businesses and commercial corridors come back even stronger after Hurricane Sandy," said Rob Walsh, the city Department of Small Business Services's commissioner in a press statement.

The new program is a citywide extension of a pilot program launched in May on Beach 116th Street in the Rockaways. In three months, that program awarded more than \$300,000 to 19 businesses. Business repairs are limited to the outside of the building, and include new signage and awnings, display windows, lighting, painting and door replacement or repair.

The Rockaways pilot program was much needed for Tom Hughes, owner of 35-year-old Station Wine and Liquor on Beach 116th Street. His business was dunked under nearly five feet of water from Sandy. Mr. Hughes was approved to receive \$20,000 from the program in the spring, and subsequently put in an additional \$15,000 to complete the necessary repairs.

"I was one of the first to jump on board," he said, noting that he's replaced his awning, display window, signage and entrance. The renovations are nearly complete, with some interior work and exterior lighting still

remaining.

"By the holidays, it'll be looking like a brand-new store," said Mr. Hughes, who added that he received 85% of the grant just days after his proposal was approved.

The expanded Storefront Improvement Program will target neighborhoods including Red Hook and the Brooklyn/Queens waterfront, the east and south shore of Staten Island, the South Street Seaport, Brighton Beach, Coney Island and Sheepshead Bay. Businesses must submit applications by Nov. 1.