



Entrepreneurs Tour Vacant Spots on Beach 116th Street

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More businesses may be filling the abandoned properties of Beach 116th Street. Dozens of people gathered on Saturday, November 2nd to scope out available retail spaces along the commercial strip.

As part of the “Rolling Up the Gates” tour, presented by the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), MasterCard, Capital One Bank, and Pratt Area Community Council (PACC), several entrepreneurs were able to take a guided tour of vacant commercial spaces. They were also given the opportunity to meet with local financial and business resource organizations to discuss available services for small business owners.

About 105 people gathered at the Rockaway Diner property for the start of the tour, where the water line seemed to be four feet high. The tour was based on a similar project that had previously taken place on Fulton Street in Brooklyn, which ultimately resulted in a reduction of the commercial vacancy rate from 21 percent to 12 percent.



One year after Sandy, Beach 116th Street is stronger than ever, and ‘Rolling Up the Gates’ highlights the available retail and commercial space along the corridor, as well as the investments made by the city, local merchants, and private funders in the past year,” Rob Walsh, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Small Business Services said. “I encourage entrepreneurs and small business owners to discover Beach 116th Street and make it your new home.”

Entrepreneurs came from places such as Flushing, Brooklyn, Long Island and other areas to check out the empty spaces. The gates were rolled up on closed properties such as the large 99 cent store, the short-lived diner in the middle of the block, the old Beach Club, spaces above Mirkin Vision and the Surf Shop, J.P. Curran's, Ultimate Headquarters, the Lawrence Hotel, the Rockaway Park Hotel and more.

The vacant spaces were left in various conditions since Sandy. Some have been completely refurbished while a few still remained in an almost untouched state since the storm. Some, like the Beach Club, had to be toured by flashlight.

“The Partnership is committed to making Beach 116th Street – Rockaway’s main street – a more pleasant place for residents to shop, and adding more businesses to the corridor will help us fulfill that commitment,” Tom Hughes, Board Director of The Beach 116th Street Partnership and owner of Station Wine & Liquor said. “We’ve cleaned up from the storm. Now we are ready for the second phase. It’s a good chance to get involved in something and in the process make some money.”

According to a survey by JGSC Group, Rockaway peninsula is home to more than 55,000 consumers with an average household income of \$68,700. Of those, 87 percent said they want more restaurants and stores and would shop locally if there were more options.

The event not only allowed potential business owners to check out available spaces, but it also highlighted the transformation that Beach 116th Street has undergone since Sandy. At least 15 storefronts have been updated along the strip and a new merchant’s association for Beach 116th Street businesses has been formed.