



CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 27, 2003 Calendar No. 20

N 030488 BDQ

IN THE MATTER of an application submitted by the Department of Small Business Services on behalf of the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District pursuant to Section 25-405 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, as amended concerning the formation of the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District, Borough of Queens, Community District 12.

On May 21, 2003, the Mayor authorized the preparation of a district plan for the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID). On May 28, 2003, on behalf of Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District Management Association, the Department of Small Business Services (DSBS) submitted the proposed district plan located in Community District 12 in the Borough of Queens.

BACKGROUND

The proposed Sutphin Boulevard BID is located in the Jamaica Center area in the Borough of Queens. It extends on Sutphin Boulevard, on both sides of the street, from Hillside Avenue to 94th Avenue.

The proposed BID overlaps a portion of the Jamaica Center Special Assessment District (SAD) at Sutphin Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue. The corner properties located on the north east side and south east side of Sutphin Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue will remain in the Jamaica Avenue SAD, and will not be included or assessed as part of the Sutphin BID. In a letter dated April 11, 2003 to the Sutphin

BID, the Jamaica Center SAD stated its support of the proposed BID.

Within the boundaries of the proposed BID are 110 businesses located on 55 properties. The buildings are predominantly low-rise structures that house fast-food restaurants, a variety of service-oriented businesses and small shops. Well-known businesses such as HSBC Bank, Northfork Bank and Popeye's Restaurant are located in the proposed BID area. In addition, the JFK AirTrain, once construction is complete, will be located at the southern end of the proposed BID, at Sutphin Boulevard and 94th Avenue.

There are no wholly residential buildings within the proposed BID, however, there are approximately 42 residential units located within 18 buildings. These properties contain commercial uses on the ground floors.

There are two courthouses-the Queens Supreme Courthouse and the new Queens Civil Courthouse within the BID. The Long Island Rail Road houses its headquarters and a terminal at the southern end of the proposed BID.

The services of the proposed BID will primarily focus on sanitation, security, holiday lighting and marketing. The

sanitation program may include cleaning and sweeping of sidewalks and gutters; emptying garbage receptacles; removal of graffiti; maintenance of trees and plantings; and snow and ice removal at bus shelters, telephones and crosswalks. The BID proposes to employ two sanitation workers, six days per week (Monday to Saturday). The program will supplement the existing municipal sanitation program.

The projected first-year budget of the proposed BID is \$177,000. It will primarily fund a sanitation program (\$65,000), security (\$18,000), marketing and promotion (\$8,000), holiday lighting (\$6,000), administration (\$60,000), maintenance of capital improvements (\$10,000) and a reserve fund of \$10,000. In addition to the BID's budget, additional funding from city, state and federal sources have been committed to provide capital improvements along Sutphin Boulevard, from Hillside to Jamaica avenues. The Port Authority has allocated funds to improve the Long Island Rail Road Terminal and environs. Capital improvements will include urban design elements such as plantings, street furniture and special street lighting.

The BID assessment method is based upon the linear front footage of assessable properties located on Sutphin Boulevard. The total linear front footage in the BID is 2,575 linear feet. Properties

on Sutphin Boulevard are proposed to be assessed at \$68.70 per linear front foot in the first year. The lowest BID assessment is \$1,372 for a property whose frontage is 20 feet. The highest BID assessment is \$12,366 for a property in the BID that has a frontage of 180 feet. The average BID assessment is \$3,404.

Extensive outreach to property owners, merchants and residents was done by the BID sponsor Greater Jamaica Development Corporation. There were many meetings, mailings and door to door outreach conducted by the sponsor over a long period. All property owners were informed of the approximate BID assessment for their properties. The outreach for the BID was documented and submitted to City Planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The district plan was reviewed pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the SEQRA regulations set forth in Volume 6 of the New York State Code of Rules and Regulations, Section 617.00 et seq., and the New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Rules of Procedure of 1991 and Executive Order No. 91 of 1977. The designated CEQR number is 03DBS005Q. The lead agency is the Department of Small Business Services.

After a study of the potential environmental impact of the proposed action, a negative declaration was issued on March 26, 2003.

LAND USE REVIEW

On May 28, 2003 the Department of Small Business Services submitted the district plan for the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District(BID)to the City Planning Department. The plan was then transmitted for review to the Office of the Mayor, the Office of the Speaker of the City Council, the Councilmembers for City Council Districts 24 and 28, Office of the Queens Borough President, and Queens Community District 12.

Community Board Public Hearing

Community Board 12 adopted a resolution recommending approval of this application (N 030488 BDQ) on June 20, 2003 by a vote of 20 in favor, 5 opposed with 6 abstentions.

City Planning Commission Public Hearing

On July 2, 2003 (Calendar No. 4) the Commission scheduled July 23, 2003 for a public hearing on the district plan. On July 23, 2003 (Calendar No. 21), the hearing was duly held. There were four speakers in favor of the proposal and none in opposition.

A representative of the Councilmember from District 24 spoke in

support of the BID. She spoke about the growth of businesses over the past 20 years and the sanitation and security problems that came along with the busy, high pedestrian traffic. She stated that the BID would help alleviate these problems by supplementing municipal services such as sanitation which would help improve the quality of life in the area.

A representative from the BID's sponsor spoke about the coordination efforts between the proposed BID and the existing Jamaica Center SAD. She stated that the Jamaica Center SAD had agreed to extend sanitation services around the corner, on Sutphin Boulevard for the properties that partially front on Sutphin Boulevard. She also stated that additional funding has been earmarked to provide capital improvements on Sutphin Boulevard, from Hillside and Jamaica Avenues, in addition to the BID's budget. She spoke of how the merchants and property owners in the BID desired for the area to be a destination and not just a location for persons making transportation connection.

The speaker also addressed the concerns of the minority of property owners that are in opposition to the BID. She stated that these property owners were concerned about the increased cost that the BID would entail but stated that it was an opinion not shared by most business and property owners in the proposed district. She

further stated that the BID was not proposing to assess residents and that all assessments were to be based on liner front feet of commercial space.

Two property owners spoke in support of the proposed BID. Both speakers enthusiastically endorsed the proposed BID and noted that the area is developing rapidly and has the potential to become a point of interest to people from all over the world. They stated that the BID would address the sanitation and security concerns of the area.

There were no other speakers and the hearing was closed.

Consideration

The Commission believes that the proposal to establish the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District in Jamaica is appropriate.

The Commission has carefully reviewed the documents that the proposed BID sponsor submitted regarding notification of constituents about the pending BID. It believes that these outreach efforts for the BID were adequate and satisfactory.

BID's are important to the City because they improve the business environment and aid in promoting healthy economic development for

the City. Jamaica Center is an important commercial area in Queens. The Commission has long supported the efforts in Jamaica to maintain economic vitality. Establishing a new BID on Sutphin Boulevard will help support the area as it develops and complements a number of public initiatives including the new Court House and the new AirTrain Terminal. Having a BID operating on Sutphin Boulevard will help address the many concerns of businesses in this area as it grows.

Resolution

The Commission supports the proposed plan and has adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the City Planning Commission certifies its unqualified approval of the proposed district plan for the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District.

The above resolution duly adopted by the City Planning Commission on August 27, 2003 (Calendar No. 20) is filed with the City Council and the City Clerk pursuant to Section 25-405 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York.

Kenneth J. Knuckles, Esq., Vice Chairman,
Angela M. Battaglia, Irwin G. Cantor, P.E., Richard W. Eaddy,
Alexander Garvin, Christopher Kui, John Merolo, Karen A. Phillips,
Dolly Williams, Commissioners