



City seeking a few good retailers

Department of Small Business Services wants fewer nail salons, more food sellers in four areas: Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn; North Harlem; Long Island City, Queens; and Southern Boulevard, Bronx.

By Adrienne Pasquarelli
May 31, 2011

The city's Department of Small Business Services is rolling out the next phase in its new neighborhood retail leasing program this week.

In January, the department identified four key neighborhoods across the city where the current lineup of retailers is inadequate to meet local needs. The four are Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant; North Harlem; Long Island City, Queens; and Southern Boulevard in the Bronx.

"We find these districts suffer from a retail mix that maybe has too many nail salons or check-cashing establishments, but our local partners don't necessarily know how to address that issue," said Larisa Ortiz Pu-Folkes, senior director of retail attraction for Small Business Services.

Each neighborhood identified three key retail spaces where the landlords want new tenants. After conducting extensive research over the last six months, including speaking with property owners, business improvement district officials, employees and real estate brokers, the program is now launching marketing materials to attract new retail tenants. "Now, we have our flashy material to show folks, and we're going out and getting prospects," Ms. Ortiz Pu-Folkes said. She noted that people working in Long Island City, which has been exploding with new office tenants with the opening of the 21-story Gotham Center and will grow more with the planned headquarters of JetBlue Airways, have requested a drugstore and more lunch options for the area. The city is reaching out to retailers such as Walgreens and Duane Reade, as well as Energy Kitchen and Chipotle, to meet such demands.

If successful, the program will launch in other parts of the city as well.

"We know that these neighborhoods are profitable areas to do business, and the city is working hard to ensure that community organizations effectively communicate these opportunities to entrepreneurs in search of good locations," said Robert Walsh, Small Business Services commissioner, in a statement.

Community leaders in the highlighted neighborhoods are applauding the city's efforts.

"It's been a great opportunity working with the leasing program to really have a very methodical approach in looking at what the community needs from a retail perspective," said Kerry McLean, director of community development at the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp. in the Bronx. "A really important part of it is changing people's perception of the neighborhood."

She noted that the area is targeting full-service restaurants, supermarkets, and fitness and entertainment-related retailers.