

## MONTAGUE STREET BID ANNUAL REPORT: FISCAL YEAR 2011

### Section I. District Background and Review of Fiscal Year 2011 Activities

#### **A. Neighborhood Needs Assessment**

Montague Street is more than a shopping district. It's one of Brooklyn's most memorable and charming streets; it is the link to the borough's famed Brooklyn Promenade; and is centrally located next to the City's third largest central business district in thriving downtown Brooklyn. Its diverse retail mix, proximity to Manhattan, and striking architecture and landscaping make Montague Street one of the City's most enjoyable districts to shop.

Home to over 100 retail tenants, Montague Street serves the neighborhood's residential community, local office workers in downtown Brooklyn, and visitors from across the globe. With such a diverse market, the retail is an eclectic mix of owner-operated, franchise, and national-chain businesses. The district's vacancy rate has changed little, hovering at 3.5%. Most of the vacancies in the district are storefronts undergoing renovation. With a high demand, most vacant retail space is leased within a year.

This year, restaurants Amin and Taze Turkish Cuisine closed. However, these were quickly replaced by Gandhi Palace and Oh, My Pasta!, respectively. 149 Montague Street, which had sat vacant for years largely due to an unusual layout, has been beautifully renovated and is now occupied by Hanco's - an extremely popular offshoot of a Boerum Hill favorite. To add to the district's reputation for a diverse range of cuisine, a tapas restaurant is also expected to open in the coming months.

In June 2010, construction commenced at 116 Montague Street above Sleepy's Mattress. An historically contextualized additional three stories were added to the building. To meet demand for more housing in the neighborhood, the upper floors will be residential. The project was completed this spring.

The BID continues its beautification efforts, including extensive landscaping and seasonal programming. With effective streetscape improvements in place, the BID has focused on expanding its programming at the start of 2011 to market and promote the district more aggressively. This is reflected in the activities pursued this spring and the goals set for FY2012. With a diverse retail mix and shopper base, the BID continues to raise awareness of the district's unique offerings and provide incentives that attract office workers, residents, and tourists, alike.

#### **B. Review of Accomplishments**

##### **Year-Round Landscaping**

*FY10 Goal: We will look to expand our tree-pit planting to a year-round program, with spring bulbs, summer/fall annuals, and (new in 2010-11) appropriate winter plantings or greens.*

Result: Achieved in June 2011. Last fiscal year, the BID planted 3,000 daffodils and

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grape hyacinth bulbs, which continue to bloom in the early spring months. With dense tree root systems and bulbs near the surface of each tree pit, perennials and annuals were deemed to be the most suitable to plant. The perennials planted – vincas and day lilies – are known for their long flowering cycle, ability to withstand harsh urban conditions, and low water and nutrient absorption intake. The new plants will remain green for most of the year, with the perennials expected to return each year.

### **Enhanced Winter Lighting**

*FY10 Goal: After the success of our pilot tree-lighting program last year, we will expand the number of decorated trees and the number of lights installed.*

Result: Achieved in December 2010. This winter, 16 trees were strung in LED lights and ten street light poles were wrapped in lights and garland. The doubling of lit trees and the decorated street light poles along Montague Street brightened the winter shopping season and created a more festive atmosphere to shop.

### **Ongoing Visitor-Attraction Initiatives**

*FY10 Goal: We will continue to explore opportunities to better reach and attract potential shoppers and visitors in the neighborhoods surrounding the district. In addition to ongoing programs to distribute our new visitor's guide at area hotels and attractions and to leverage social media, we will explore possible coupons and flyer programs, with the goal of advertising for local businesses and tracking responses. And we will continue our pedestrian-street event, capitalizing on the presence of visitors in the neighborhood for the Brooklyn Book Festival; this year, we'll be expanding programs to support and encourage merchant participation in the events.*

Result: Achieved. The BID has expanded its Twitter and Facebook presence and using it as a forum to advertise local business events and promotions. This has resulted in an increase in Twitter and Facebook followers and has helped local businesses attract more customers. In June 2009, the BID's Facebook page had 15 "Likes." By June 2010, it had increased to 39. The site now has 80 "Likes" with 26 new users since January 2011. That's a 200% increase in one year, with the majority joining in the last six months. For its Twitter feed, the BID nearly doubled its followers to 246 since January. Of the 121 total tweets sent out since April 2009, 53 of them – promoting store discounts and district events – were done in FY2011.

The two Summer Space events last September were well received with the largest turnout occurring on the last date. Filled with local families and visitors, the biggest draw was a dog show sponsored by Montague Street business – Pet Emporium and hosted by the Brooklyn Heights Association. In addition to a number of local community organizations, 30% of businesses open during Summer Space participated. Post event merchant surveys revealed 65% of those businesses experienced increased foot traffic, 44% reported an increase in sales, while 38% saw no change in sales. Seventy percent stated they would participate again, while only 10% said they would not.

### **Expansion of BID Online Presence**

*FY10 Goal: We will revise and expand our current website to offer more detail on BID programs, to provide digital versions of our print publications and press releases, and to better feature the online activity of BID members. We'll also explore opportunities for further online advertising.*

Result: Achieved in March 2011. In an effort to become a one-stop resource for all things Montague Street, the BID revamped its website, adding new content and features. Those looking to eat in the district can now link to menus for every district restaurant on one page. Visitors looking to find out about recent events and BID projects, now have even more information to access on the site. Every quarterly newsletter is now available online, with the most recent newsletter featured on the home page. Other news resources include recent press releases and BID-related news articles.

Using the website as a tool to get feedback on how the district excels and how it can improve, visitors are invited to fill out a shopper survey on the home page. In addition to increased functionality, the layout and design of the site has been enhanced and new images that highlight the district's many assets are prominently displayed.

Other online social media tools were also updated. The BID's Facebook page now boasts new content and photos and the number of postings on both the BID's Twitter and Facebook accounts have increased significantly. The BID is advertising merchant promotions and events via its Facebook page and Twitter posts, resulting in an increase in traffic to the BID's social media outlets (see "Ongoing Visitor-Attraction Initiatives").

#### **Research into Capital Improvements**

*FY10 Goal: We will reach out to BID members regarding their preferences for future improvements to the public realm, and we will begin developing funding and installation alternatives in response to member priorities.*

Result: Ongoing. The BID begun distributing surveys to its members to solicit input on capital improvements they would like to see in the district. The BID continues to collect responses. Once tallied, these surveys will assist the BID in identifying which capital improvements are a priority for its stakeholders. Once key capital improvements goals are identified, funding and maintenance opportunities will be explored.

#### **C. Review of Activities Data**

Please see Tab 1 of the accompanying file, *MontagueBID\_Impacts\_FY11.xls*.

### **Section II. Looking Ahead: Fiscal Year 2012 Goals**

#### **Merchant & Shopper Surveys**

We will ensure the BID's programs and services are aligned with the needs of its stakeholders and accurately identify opportunities to increase market share by conducting two surveys. The first survey will solicit information from BID merchants while the other will be distributed publicly to solicit input from shoppers, residents, area office workers, and visitors. From the survey results, the BID hopes to gain insight on the effectiveness of existing BID programs and services and potential new programs or initiatives that would further serve the district.

**Marketing Program**

The BID will develop a marketing program that will seek to appeal to downtown Brooklyn's diverse shopper base. The marketing program would effectively enhance the branding of the district, promote BID businesses, and attract additional shoppers to the district.

**Retail Attraction Strategy**

In an effort to encourage a healthy retail mix, attract retailers sought by the community, and lower vacancies, we will create a retail attraction strategy that includes direct outreach to retail representatives regarding space availability in the district and retail-relevant data.

**District Marketing & Merchant Collateral**

We will provide relevant information to BID merchants with the creation and distribution of relevant contact information for business-related concerns. The BID will also seek to publish a district map and guide.

**Capacity Building**

With only a part-time employee, the BID has been limited in its capacity to expand programming and initiate new projects. In order to build capacity within the organization, the BID will seek to partner with local organizations, including local educational institutions for internship and student projects and cultural organizations for cross-promotional efforts.

**Section III. Contracts**

See Tab 2 in the accompanying file, *MontagueBID\_Impacts\_FY11.xls*.

**Section IV. Organizational Information**

Brigit Pinnell joined the BID in January 2011, replacing Chelsea Mauldin as Executive Director. The BID's staff is comprised of a single, part-time employee, as it has been since its inception in 1998.