

# SBS IN THE NEWS



## Blaze destroys row of stores: Ten businesses hit on Bainbridge

By Daniel Beekman  
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Flames engulfed a Norwood commercial strip early on Halloween as business owners and neighbors stood by and wept. The five-alarm blaze, reported at 3 a.m., took 200 firefighters more than five hours to extinguish.

It damaged 17 businesses on Bainbridge Avenue between E. 204th and E. 205th streets, and around the corner on E. 204th Street. The Department of Buildings has ordered ten businesses – Bainbridge Bakery, Plaza Rio Nilo Records, Yazmin’s Barbershop, ZNS Realty Corp, Bainbridge Avenue Grocery, Bainbridge Fish Market, LTM European Market, Nelson Seafood Express and La Mexicana Grocery and El Diamante Restaurant – demolished.

Ming Wong Garden Restaurant, Bainbridge Laundry, Shahjalal Grocery, Neighborhood Gifts and Wireless, Betty Place Salon, Church of the Holy Nativity and Hillside Meat Market were damaged.

“The fire was a nightmare,” Hillside Meat Market owner Sal Mirra said.

Mirra thought the fire was going to destroy his business but it escaped the worst.

“When your store has a fire you see everything you worked for disappear,” Mirra said.

Fire marshals have yet to determine the cause of the blaze. Bainbridge Bakery, a neighborhood standby, suffered a fire in April and was set to reopen on Monday, November 2. Because of an insurance snafu, its owners were without insurance until then, Mirra said. Neighbor Marta Delorde noticed an “open soon” sign in the bakery window last week. It appears that the fire spread through a shared crawl space.

“So sad!” Delorde said.

The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) held a meeting with Bainbridge Avenue business owners on

Halloween and scheduled another for Friday, November 6. SBS will help the business owners obtain copies of permits lost in the fire, spokeswoman Laura Postiglione said. The Legal Aid Society plans to offer free counsel. Community Board 7 and the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation are also involved.

Neighbor Gus Guzman described the damaged strip as the “backbone of Norwood.” Seniors in particular counted on the businesses, he said.

“We had the fish market, the meat market, the bakery: a one-stop shop close to home,” Guzman added.

Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. promised to push for rapid reconstruction of the block. Bainbridge Avenue business owners want to return, even those without insurance, Mirra said. He all but ruled out arson. The main landlord on the block is “a sweetheart,” Mirra said. The bakery had all new equipment, he reported.

Bainbridge Avenue Grocery owner Nassar Hassan is depressed. He lost more than \$100,000 worth of goods in the fire. Bainbridge Fish Market owner Jung Park heard about the fire on the radio; he was at home in Queens.

“We felt bad,” Park said. “The landlord plans to rebuild but how long will it take?”

Rosita Jimenez moved to Norwood in 2008, in part because she liked the Bainbridge Avenue commercial strip. Jimenez is concerned that graffiti vandals will target the damaged businesses.

“The neighborhood looks bad,” she said.

But Norwood has pulled together to help the strip recover.

“I had customers ask if they could help me clean up,” Mirra said. “We’ll all friends.”