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## Sutphin Boulevard Storefronts to Get Makeover With City Grant

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Several shops along Sutphin Boulevard, one of Jamaica's busiest commercial strips, will soon get a makeover in an effort to beautify the area and make it more attractive for shoppers.

The Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District, which represents more than 130 businesses located between Hillside and 94th avenues, just won a \$95,000 grant — part of the city's third annual "Neighborhood Challenge" initiative — to improve five storefronts along the thoroughfare, according to Simone Price, executive director of the Sutphin Boulevard BID.

Currently, Price said, facades feature signs and awnings which come in different shapes and colors, creating visual chaos. Last year, the BID came up with a set of guidelines for local businesses to follow a similar design.

"We are trying to make them [businesses] follow those guidelines so they can still keep their unique identity, but they will have to do it within the framework of the guidelines," Price said.

"Well lit, visually appealing storefronts create better experiences for consumers, residents and workers," Price added in a statement.

Jamaica has been undergoing a number of changes, attracting new developments. Several new projects are planned for Sutphin Boulevard, including a 580-unit housing complex called The Crossing, and a 24-story Hilton Garden Inn, which will feature 210 rooms, a restaurant and a business center.

Councilman Rory Lancman said that the changes planned along Sutphin Boulevard will help "attract more economic interest and development in a booming neighborhood in Queens."

In order to participate in the program, businesses have to be located within 500 feet from a subway station. They also need to show a financial commitment to the program, as they will be responsible for covering 20 percent of the cost.

The BID will pay the rest, said Price, adding that several store owners have already expressed an interest in the program.

The Sutphin Boulevard BID is among seven groups that received the grant from the city's Department of Small Business Services and the New York City Economic Development Corporation this year, but the only one in Queens.

The economic development group SoBRO and the arts group No Longer Empty also received a grant to activate the vacant Old Bronx Borough Courthouse as an art space and the Lower East Side Business Improvement District received money to launch a program connecting merchants with street artists who will create temporary murals on the storefronts' roll-down gates.