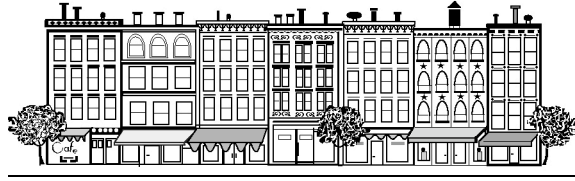


Columbus Avenue

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



Annual Report 2008-2009



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Section 1

District Background and Review of Fiscal Year 2008 Activities

The Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District (BID) is a thriving retail community in the heart of New York City's Upper West Side, wholly contained within the Central Park West Historic District. The district includes the American Museum of Natural History, The Rose Center for Earth and Space, and is just steps from the New-York Historical Society. The fifteen block district runs along Columbus Avenue, dipping into side streets where there is commercial development. Its southern border is at West 67th Street, just a block from Lincoln Center, and the northern boundary is currently on the south side of West 82nd Street.

- **Neighborhood Needs Assessment:**

Characterization of current real estate market in district: The entire stretch of the Columbus Avenue BID is a mix of low-rise retail ground-floor establishments comprising contemporary shops and restaurants housed in late 19th and early 20th century buildings that define the first wave of construction on the Upper West Side. The retail establishments provide a colorful and continuous flow throughout, with architecture composed almost exclusively of French flats and tenements, typically five to six stories high. The second through top floors of these buildings are primarily residential spaces, and although there are a few office spaces, they are no longer permitted above the ground floor, except those now existing and grandfathered. The one architectural exception within the district is the stately American Museum of Natural History, stretching for four blocks on the east side of the Avenue and surrounded by beautiful Theodore Roosevelt Park.

Major tenants moving in or out: The area has experienced more vacant storefronts than in the ten years since the BID was established, attributed to the general economic climate seen throughout the nation. However, at the moment, although Columbus Avenue has eight vacancies (4%), it has also seen two recent expansions (both restaurants). The largest retail establishment to close shop (Shabby Chic) went out of business nationwide. The other vacancies have all been small retailers and one restaurateur.

New developments or capital projects in district: The BID is wholly within one of New York City's landmark districts, the Central Park West Historic District, and therefore not eligible for new developments. There are currently no capital projects in the district and none expected.



Other problems or needs that exist in the district: In an attempt to address the needs of retailers, the BID will hold a merchants' breakfast (Sept. 15, '09) in which a speaker from NYC Business Solutions will be present, as well as other speakers, to encourage shared strategies and efforts. The BID is also currently seeking ways to bring retailers into our major annual restaurateur event (see New Taste Event, below).

Review of Accomplishments:

The following is an update on the status of goals noted in last year's annual report:

- 1. New Taste of the Upper West Side event: In just two short years, this event has established itself as one of the premiere food events in New York City. From last year to this one, the event more than doubled in size to 1700 attendees, with several hundred more who wanted to attend but could not be accommodated due to space limitations. The event included all of the major chefs from the Upper West Side, and with so many high profile chefs who have recently moved to the area, the event was truly a celebration of a major blossoming of gastronomic choices now available on the Upper West Side. This is a huge change from just a few years ago, and is noted in a quote by Tim Zagat in the preface of the 2009 Zagat Guide.
- 2. Greening of Columbus Avenue: We received a grant for \$350,000 from Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal for our fence project. This money will allow us to move forward with building, but it is currently going through channels in Albany and has not yet been received. Although we have learned that it can take a long time to implement changes, we are currently making changes, one small step at a time. DOT has recently installed the bases for muni-meters that will soon be active, and we are hoping to retrofit our old parking meters into stainless steel round bike racks, that will be attached to the existing meter poles. We are actively trying to make our area more attractive to bikers and pedestrians, and have been steering committee members of the Upper West Side Street Renaissance Committee, an offshoot of Transportation Alternatives. We now also have a Sunday greenmarket on the continuous four-block sidewalk stretch adjacent to Theodore Roosevelt Park, which surrounds the American Museum of Natural History. This has provided a sense of place for the area, and is a wonderful year-round community amenity, as well as being extremely popular with residents.
- 3. Expansion Project: The BID makers had intended the original BID area to go as far north as West 86th Street, the logical conclusion to the district. Instead, when the BID was being formed between 1996-1999, one obstreperous property owner stood in the way of allowing the BID to form. After failing to reach consensus with this owner for several years, they ended the district at West 82nd Street, allowing the BID to become a



recognized District by the City of New York in late 1999. Now, a decade later, the expansion project is underway and slowly moving forward. A meeting of property owners and merchants within the expanded area was held, and a survey was personally distributed to merchants and mailed to property owners. This past winter, however, due to the economic climate throughout the nation, a decision was made with NYC's Small

Business Services to put the expansion project on hold until spring. It is now proceeding once again.

- 4. Assessment Increase: The BID had not gotten an increase since its inception in late 1999. However, after following the City's several-month requirements, we were granted the increase we sought this past year.

- 5. Ten Year Assessment: Where do we Go From Here?: The BID turned ten years old in January. Having reached that milestone, the board has been considering how best to move forward. As you will read below, we have decided to exert efforts to greatly expand the New Taste of the Upper West Side event to a multi-day event, and are still trying to figure out ways to showcase a more varied group of merchants and retailers, though a number of challenging and unusual ideas are under discussion. The BID is also very committed to expanded greening amenities, and working with DOT, Upper West Side Streets Renaissance Campaign, and Transportation Alternatives to make them reality.

The BID did not undertake any other major activities this past year that were not identified with the goals we had set for ourselves.

Review of Activities Data:

Please see spreadsheet, entitled Section I Review of Fiscal Year 2008 Activities Data

Section II
Looking Ahead Fiscal Year 2009 Goals

Top Five Goals for July 2009 - June 2010:

- 1. New Taste of the Upper West Side Expanded Version: This sellout event more than doubled its size this year to have over 1700 attendees, with many turned away due to tent capacity limits. Our elegant food tasting event (see video online at www.newtasteuws.com) called attention to Columbus Avenue through all kinds of media, and served as a wonderful advertisement for the district. However, many changes are being talked about for next year's event, which will be on two nights instead of one, though both will be quite different from one another. Additionally, there is a morning event being planned that will benefit the



two schools on the block, as all revenue taken in will go to the school's Parents' Associations. We are also planning for an event in conjunction with our major one that will hopefully showcase the shops on Columbus Avenue instead of just the restaurants. We hope to be able to implement these changes into the next New Taste event, which will be held from June 4th to June 5th, and possibly as early as June 3rd, with the retail event.

- 2. Greening of Columbus Avenue: We are hopeful that retrofitting of selected defunct parking meters into bike racks will occur this year, as they are sorely needed on the Avenue. We have already identified those we would like to have retrofit, when the tops of the old meters are capped off and the muni-meters are in place. The existing meter poles would then provide the support for the new round stainless steel bike rack. We are also hoping to add some benches to the avenue. To the project described above, we are working with Renew, an English company that produces a recycling can that includes an information center (video component).
- 3. Fence project: Now that we have received a grant from our Assembly Member to construct the green fence around the I.S. 44 schoolyard with one that is unique and contains living green elements, we are waiting for the grant to actually be received, so that this long-awaited project will move forward. The fence has already been designed by the prominent firm of Richard Dattner and Partners, Architects. We are hopeful that this project can be built by next summer.
- 4. Expansion Project: Having stalled for the past two years as described above in Section I, we are hopeful that by taking on this project in-house that it will now move forward. Over the years, the BID has been approached numerous times by merchants in the expansion area, asking how they can be a part of the BID to partake of our services and improvements. When one looks at the proposed district, there is run-down quality we know we can eliminate. The City's timetable for this project is 18 months, and hoping for completion in 2010.

Section III

Fiscal Report

Please refer to the template Fiscal Report for this information.

Section IV

Contracts

Please refer to the template entitled Contracts for this information.



Section V

Organizational Information

The Columbus Avenue BID currently has two full-time employees, an executive director and her assistant. There are no other employees. The addition of the assistant was made possible when we received our assessment increase, and has proved to be invaluable, and we now are able to undertake more in-house projects, such as the expansion project, our own computer trouble-shooting, etc.