



The RIVERDALE PRESS

Leaders ready to help Stella D'oro tenants

By Kate Pastor

Community leaders are working to ensure that whatever business inhabits the now-shuttered Stella D'oro factory on West 237th Street gives Kingsbridge an economic boost.

With the Broadway factory on the market for \$30 million, Community Board 8 members said they would like to see the space used for much-needed retail or a manufacturing plant like the one that had been there for many decades.

“We expect to be participating in all discussions on development of the site,” said Bob Fanuzzi, chair of the board’s Economic Development Committee.

The Board’s only formal role would be if a buyer were to request a zoning change or require a permitted parking variance, the former of which would trigger Community Board hearings and a recommendation to the City Council’s Land Use Committee. But with or without the need to rezone from light manufacturing, the Community Board is making its desires known.

Marlene Cintron, the new president of the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation, is also stepping in. In an interview with The Press, she floated what she called a “pie in the sky” vision for the property to house a culinary school by day, which could rent space to small business in need of Department of Health certified facilities, by night.

Ms. Cintron said when businesses looking for Bronx property come to her, she’s pointing them toward Kingsbridge.

“Stella D’oro is really number one in terms of where we’re looking at first,” she said.

“It’s a viable building, it’s an extremely viable community.”

So far, interested parties have included storage facilities, warehouses, bakeries, companies interested almost exclusively in retail, as well as mixed residential/retail developers, according to Massey Knakal Realty broker Karl Brumback. Additionally, Ms. Cintron said she has been in touch with a textile company considering the facility for design, manufacturing and retail of its products, as well as an engine manufacturer. Both are foreign corporations, she said.

The fact that some of the first nibbles have been from manufacturing companies is likely to encourage Mr. Fanuzzi, who said he was not necessarily asking for the incoming business to provide “living-wage” jobs, but also said, “we do believe manufacturing does deliver a higher wage for its workers than retail.”

However, he was open to retail options, too, and referred to a long-standing list of shops he would welcome.

“We have unmet retail priorities that have still not come to fruition on Broadway,” he said.

On the list are a movie theater, bookstore and an additional grocery store.

“Anything people go to Westchester for, we want here,” he said.

Ms. Cintron said that for the right business, BOEDC will help find appropriate tax breaks and secure loans, but that the final decision will come down to the seller which, through its realtor, has expressed openness to any business with the funds to purchase it.

This is part of the March 4, 2010 online edition of The Riverdale Press.

© 2010. All Rights Reserved.