

Red Hook BID Gives Cold Shoulder to Capital Improv. Plan

By Craig McGuire

Capital improvement plans proposed by the Red Hook Industrial Business Improvement District (BID) steering committee received a cool reception from various community leaders at a recent open forum.

"Red Hook has a great history, a wonderful past, and a precarious present," said John McGettrick, co-chairman of the Red Hook Civic Association. "We don't want to do anything to further jeopardize it."

Carl Hum, director of economic development for the South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation (SBLDC), said the proposals were designed to enhance the community. The SBLDC is working with the BID committee.

Beatrice Byrd, president of the Red Hook Tenants Association West, said, "It takes input from the community, otherwise what you will do is superimpose what business wants on the community."

A BID is a specific geographic area in which business property owners agree to assess themselves to fund extra services. Red Hook's BID, like the capital improvements, is only proposed, and must go through a long approval process before it comes into

existence. The capital improvements would be funded through state, local and private sources.

The proposals reflect the results of surveys conducted jointly by the BID steering committee and the SBLDC. The proposal includes improvements in gateways, signage, landscaping and lighting in the business areas. The gateways are being suggested for the intersections of Hamilton Avenue at Van Brunt, Clinton, and Columbia streets.

Mike Ihne, a member of the Beard Street Association, said he liked several of the proposals but called the plan to create archways over the three key gateways onto the Red Hook peninsula "a negative idea."

"I don't need to see archways," agreed Byrd, a member of Community Board 6. "I need to see people working."

SBLDC Executive Director Bette Stoltz said the proposals encouraged economic development and should be "accepted in that spirit."

"We don't have to accept archways," Byrd fired back, adding, "If there were time we would sit down and look to see where we hold common ground and move on those things."

"We have to send the ar-

chitects in a direction," said Stoltz. "The problem is that we are on a clock."

Stoltz was referring to the state-funded consultant contracts which expire in February.

Judith Dailey, vice president of the Red Hook Tenants Association East, said the short notice she received for the forum made it impossible for her to sup-

port any plan.

Both Byrd and Dailey are considering holding joint tenant meetings at which they would present the BID's proposals to residents of the Red Hook Houses.

Community leaders brought several proposals of their own to the table.

"Would not a BID plan fundamentally include a job

training program?" asked McGettrick.

Hum said that additional services, such as sanitation, would generate employment in Red Hook. "There is a strong feeling to hire locally, because these people are likely to take more interest in their job."

Although Hum said there were several "heavy" tones throughout the eve-

ning, there wasn't overriding discontent.

The architects will now refine and incorporate many of the suggestions and present them at a meeting to be held in late January or early December.

"Hopefully we will write up the district plan, including these capital improvements, by early spring," said Hum.