

# SOUTHEAST QUEENS PRESS

Volume 10 Issue No. 43 Oct. 23-29, 2009

## Bringing Change To Cambria Heights

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This is his suburbia. Tucked in a quaint corner of Queens bleeding into Nassau County. Kevin Jemmott had envied the manicured lawns and blooming flower beds of Cambria Heights.

“You drive through Cambria Heights and you can see people take pride in their homes,” Jemmott said. Though he lived in the neighborhood community of St. Albans he moved the short distance to the object of his affection 15 years ago.

Jemmott immediately jumped into the trenches. He joined the Cambria Heights Civic Association.

“I saw a lot of things going on in the community,” he said; in the surrounding areas developers encroached on the neighborhood with two family homes rising from the rubble of plots that previously held single family houses. Jemmott said a rezoning tourniquet was attached to keep unscrupulous builders from overflowing into Cambria Heights. “In nine months we got it rezoned,” he said.

A decade after joining the civic association, Jemmott set his sights on the business district.

“I had a lot of success with the civic; I thought they’d be able to build and grow,” he said. In 2005, Jemmott and a few members started the Cambria Heights Development Corporation. “I resigned as president because I wanted to work with the businesses,” Jemmott said.

The business district of Cambria Heights stretches from the Cross Island Parkway on Linden Blvd to Francis Lewis Blvd. The small strip of businesses is a host of mom and pop shops.

“We held meetings with businesses to find out what their concerns and what the residents concerns were,” Jemmott said. “People didn’t know what businesses were on Linden Blvd.” According to Jemmott, to boost the patronage of the strip, a marketing plan, which included a newsletter, Web Site, shoppers guide and red banners embossed with, “Shop Cambria Heights” soon appeared throughout the shopping district. He said a 2006 retail market analysis showed that businesses were capturing 6percent to 7 percent of the available dollars in the community.

“What we found is that at 6 to 7 percent they can do better than that,” he said, “Even if they double to just 12 percent it would be better.”

Though the business district's visibility has improved since the development corporation's inception, Jemmott sees a gap that can be filled by a bookstore, or a café. The organization has reached out to both Starbucks and Barnes and Noble, but both companies shot the location down. "They didn't want to be an anchor store," he said.

He hailed the neighborhood as Queens little secret," with a household income average of \$75,700 which is way above the Queens norm of \$57,630."

Including the marketing plan for the neighborhood, Jemmott said the corporation hosts seminars to introduce business owners to Cambria Heights. "We want everyone to come," he said.

The Cambria Heights Business District's future and growth potential rests with business owners. According to Jemmott, the organization's vision is for owners to make façade improvements and create uniformity. He said the corporation hopes to get them to work together to create a theme.

"People want a shopping experience." He said. "They will pay a little extra for the convenience of shopping in their own community.

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