

Gazette LEADER

OCTOBER 7, 1999

Elizabeth Avenue SID gets budget approval

By Michelle Runge
Staff Writer

ELIZABETH—Michael Zeik of Leonardo's Jewelers meant it when he thanked the Elizabeth City Council Oct. 12 for approving the budget for the Elizabeth Avenue Special Improvement District budget, an appropriation of \$138,298 earmarked for "helping the citizens of Elizabeth help themselves."

The budget will give members of the Elizabeth Avenue Partnership the financial means to begin beautifying the streets with special landscaping from Bridge Street near City Hall on Winfield Scott Plaza to the Turnpike overpass on Routes 1&9, something board members of the partnership have been anxiously anticipating.

"I notice signs at our city's gateways displaying Elizabeth's 'New energy,'" Zeik told the City Council during the public

The Community Advocates have assisted in the creation of the Elizabeth Avenue Special Improvement District.

portion of the meeting. "The difference for us is that now by establishing and funding our district we are able to channel our energies in a way that could benefit everyone."

Some of those ways to increase property values and business activity include plans

to improve parking and access to shops along the Elizabeth Avenue shopping corridor; provide cleaner, safer and more attractive streets and performing block-by-block assessments to pinpoint weaknesses and strengths of the district.

Zeik and 13 other members of Elizabeth's business community, including Mel Acosta of Melly Mel Productions, Mauricio Bonifacio of Gelateria Freddo, Jonathan Phillips of Morris Avenue Bicycle Shop and Rafael Salerno of Tri-State Furniture, among others, have been hard at work making their businesses benefit by establishing the district.

But can they compete with the Jersey Gardens mall, a fear many a merchant has harbored in his or her heart?

"Actually we plan to work with the mall's location and hope that if people choose to shop there we can expect a trickle-down effect because of the great location," Phillips said. "This Special Improvement District, the Elizabeth Avenue Partnership, gives us individual property owners and business owners a greater opportunity to affect how our district will be presented to the public."

Zeik said that aesthetically enhancing Elizabeth Avenue is not all the partnership has planned especially with the 20 million shoppers expected to visit the mall over the next year.

"Many of those people have not been to Elizabeth in years," Zeik said. "This is an opportunity to put Elizabeth on the map as a shopping destination."



Photo by Milton Mills

Members of the Elizabeth Avenue Partnership, from left, seated, Manuel Sanchez and 1st Ward Councilman Manny Grova and, standing, Jonathan Phillips, Michael Zeik and Raphael Salerno, are excited about the recently-formed Elizabeth Avenue Special Improvement District.

First Ward Councilman Manny Grova is the City Council representative appointed to oversee the 2000 fiscal year budget for the Special Improvement District which garners revenues of \$27,250 from private sponsors, and anticipates \$111,048 to be raised by the Special Improvement District members.

Appropriations include \$112,891 for promotions and \$25,400 for administrative costs totalling \$138,298.

Zeik said several individuals within the district have contributed their own personal funds for the benefit of the whole business community.

"Private donations have already added up to thousands of dollars, and this is only the beginning," said Zeik. "We hope that this partnership with the City Council will grow and prove to be a great success. Thanks for your dedication to our city and its future."

