

NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: UPPER EAST SIDE; Trying to Tame the Mishmash That Is East 86th Street

By DAVID KIRBY OCT. 29, 2000

For years, much of East 86th Street has been a noisy tangle of traffic, pedestrians, shoppers and street vendors. Recently, upscale businesses patronized by residents of neighboring town houses and high-rises have joined the mishmash of banks, clothing stores, pizza parlors -- not to mention piles of garbage -- that have characterized the area. Heavy crosstown traffic clogs the street and the subway stop at Lexington Avenue adds to congestion.

"Anything we can do to help that community improve is important to us," said Fran Sachs, director of strategic planning of Town Sports International, which owns the New York Sports Club on 86th Street near Lexington Avenue.

Because of the strip's problems, business and property owners on and near East 86th Street are seeking to form a business improvement district. It has taken more than a decade to advance the project, partly because it has been hard to reach a consensus on the boundaries.

But next month, the steering committee of the proposed group, to be called the Yorkville East 86th Street Business Improvement District, will present a plan to Community Board 8 for an improvement district bounded by East 85th Street, East 87th Street and Lexington and Second Avenues. If the plan is approved by the City Council -- generally six months after the proposal reaches the community board --

property owners in the four-block area would pay additional taxes, with the money raised going toward extra security, improved garbage pickup and vermin control and general beautification.

There are already 40 BID's in the city, the mayor's office said Friday. With this one, as is often the case with BID's, agreement didn't come quickly.

"We whittled down the boundaries to form a consensus," said Hedi White, a member of Community Board 8 and former president of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, sponsor of the plan. Noting that the boundaries originally proposed extended east to First Avenue and south to 84th Street, she added, "That doesn't mean some in the district aren't happy or don't care, but we have overwhelming support."

Some people felt there was too much whittling. "We voted to support this, and some people donated money," said Kathy Jolowicz, president of the East 83rd/84th Block Association, which serves an area that was excluded. "We were very disappointed." DAVID KIRBY

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A version of this article appears in print on October 29, 2000, on Page 14014010 of the National edition with the headline: NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: UPPER EAST SIDE; Trying to Tame the Mishmash That Is East 86th Street.