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Santander Bank cuts ribbon on new south Bronx location

BY SARAH VALENZUELA

Santander Bank officially cut the ribbon on its new location in the south Bronx on Wednesday, December 6.

Though this is only the bank’s third branch in the Bronx, the company promised to generously contribute to its host communities.

“It is really just a demonstration of our commitment to a borough that’s vibrant,” said Santander’s Metro New York and Northern New Jersey region president, Elsie Leon-Cruz. “It’s up and coming and there’s a lot of tremendous opportunity there and we want to be a part of that.”

The bank has branches in all five boroughs of New York City.

However, its new location at 220 E. 161st Street near Yankee Stadium was especially notable for Leon-Cruz, who grew up in the south Bronx.

“To come back and be able to give back in a small way, it’s very powerful and I’m very proud of that,” Cruz added.

Though the ribbon cutting took place in December, Santander’s 161st Street branch actually opened for business on November 13th.

Since then, the bank has seen more customers than anticipated. They have assisted with everything from answering financial questions of those who do not bank with Santander, to helping others open accounts or provide regular banking services for existing customers.

In the same area as the 161st Street branch, there are two larger banks that have had their locations in the vicinity for many years.

In fact, many pedestrians who were passing by the new branch were not fully aware of Santander’s presence.

“My mom banks here,” said a high school girl who stopped by the branch to ask about depositing paychecks. “It’s definitely convenient. Their other location isn’t near here and the other ones are in the city.”

While the company said their work is not focused on big marketing at the local level, one of the ways Santander is helping the community is by staffing their banks with experienced local workers who know the people from the community.

“Getting that support from Santander, who’s shown they are invested in supporting Bronx communities and Bronx businesses, that’s really meaningful and really exciting,” said Alix Fellman, a WHEDCo manager.

Santander plans to leverage already existing financial literacy programs at local public schools during 2018.

Santander Bank is owned by the larger Spanish Santander Bank, Banco Santander.

“It’s not necessarily about the brick and mortar but about how we help our customers,” Leon-Cruz explained. “There’s a very warm environment and a smaller footprint to really support our customers at whatever stage they are in their life, whether it’s to open an account or get more information about loans, that’s what we’re there for.”

During the ribbon cutting, Santander presented checks to two local organizations, Bronx Works and the Women’s Housing and Economic Development Corporation.

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Though Santander’s home base is in Boston, MA it has locations throughout the northeast part of the country.

“I didn’t even know this was a bank,” said one gentleman who worked as a security guard in the shopping center where the bank is located.

“I don’t bank here, I’m just using the ATM,” said a shopper who walked out of the neighboring Food Bazaar supermarket.

Some, however, said they had benefitted from the opening of Santander in this location.

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