

60th Street Progress Continues: More Than 50 Shops Open

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A shop owner awaits his customers at his fruit stand on 60th Street in the east side of Baghdad's Rashid district, Feb. 19. More than 50 shops have opened on 60th Street since the beginning of December. Photo by Spc. Ben Washburn, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division.

BAGHDAD — During the past few months, Iraqis and Multi-National Division – Baghdad Soldiers have been working hard to make sure the economic resurgence thrives throughout Baghdad.

The Soldiers of 2nd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, attached to the 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Inf. Div., have been working with the Iraqi government on major restoration projects in the southeastern part of the Rashid district.

Among the projects was the effort to restore 60th Street, which involved a three-step process: provide security, clean and restore the streets, and begin the micro-grant program.

“The initial planning started with the security improvements that started back last fall,” said Capt. Kevin Wynes, a Washington, D.C., native, who serves as a civil affairs team leader assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Sqdn.

The Iraqi Army took the lead in providing security for the area by establishing three checkpoints on 60th Street, in an attempt to help reassure the citizens that the ISF (Iraqi security forces) are committed to their security, he said.

The improved security situation contributed to the viability of the projects now under way.

“Security is the predicate for all economics,” said Maj. Patrick Garrett, a Hillsborough, Ore., native, who is assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th BCT, 1st Inf. Div., and serves as a Provincial Reconstruction Team governance advisor, attached to 2nd Sqdn.

Once the streets were secure, sanitation crews were contracted by Coalition forces to clean the street and ready it for business.

“Between our contracts and the Government of Iraq contributions, we were able to clean that street,” Wynes said. “The Government of Iraq is definitely doing its part in rebuilding. The Ministry of Electricity has committed to repairing not only 60th Street, but all of Hadar.”

With the streets safe, clean and restored, the final step was to begin the economic revival of 60th Street.

“In November, we didn’t have one shop open on 60th Street; in December, we had seven shops – and now we’ve got about 53 shops,” Wynes said.

Shop owners have the ability to reopen their shops through the micro-grant program, which provides shop owners the monetary support they need to get started, Garrett said.

“Here’s economic assistance to get them to open a shop more quickly than they would otherwise,” he added. “Micro-grants just help speed the system along.”

With the Iraqi government and Coalition forces working together toward security and prosperity, the response from the people has been optimistic.

“Everything we’ve heard so far has been extremely positive,” Wynes said.

Now that al-Qaida has been removed from the area, people are really excited about their future, he explained.