

\$18M Arts Center will open in spring of 2007

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The Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL) will receive the keys to its new \$18 million, state-of-the-art Jamaica Performing Arts Center facility in December, said Karen Taylor-Bass, external affairs associate for the project.

JCAL is scheduled to inaugurate the center in the spring of 2007.

Owned by the city, the performance venue will showcase the diverse and unique culture and talent of local, national and internationally renowned artists.

"This center comes at a great time," said Taylor-Bass. "If you walk along southeast Queens, you'll see a lot of construction and new businesses. We feel the center's cultural development will help spur economic development. Jamaica is becoming a very exciting place," Taylor-Bass added.

The landmark building is being renovated with capital funds from the offices of the Mayor, the past and present Borough Presidents Claire Shulman and Helen Marshall as well as past and present City Councilmembers, Archie Spigner and Leroy Comrie.

Continuing Queens' long tradition of nurturing new talent - from the likes of celebrated individuals from Count Basie to Al Roker and Tony Bennett to Run DMC and Donna Karan - the Jamaica Performing Arts Center will become a

much-needed arts destination for the Queens community as well as contribute to the economic development of Jamaica.

"We will host many events here, for instance we'll have flamenco dances, film festivals and comedy jams. We intend to be a hub for artists from the borough," said Taylor-Bass. "The center will offer businesses the opportunity to hold conferences."

The project, housed in a completely renovated 1858 landmark building, the (former) First Reformed Dutch Church of Jamaica, will become the area's arts hub - featuring a premier state-of-the-art, 400-seat multi-purpose performance space that will offer theatre productions, music concerts, film festivals, dance performances and arts education.

Additionally, the project will offer affordable performance and rehearsal space for other professional arts entities as well as civic and community groups. The facility will be fully equipped for video and telecommunications conferencing, making it an efficient meeting and seminar space for business and corporations.

"As for the artists themselves, the impact this center will make for them is simple," said Taylor-Bass. "There are so many performers in Queens that have excelled in a wide range of areas from fashion to rap to jazz. We plan for our center to showcase the rich tapestry of culture that our diverse community has."