

# Jamaica will welcome a hotel boom

## Rezoning has brought major development into downtown

BY DONALD BERTRAND

MAJOR HOTEL development — including a 16-story Marriott Courtyard with 172 rooms, a 150-room Residence Inn and a third 150-room hotel — is planned for a proposed “airport village” in downtown Jamaica.

The sudden boom is the direct result of the rezoning of some 368 blocks in downtown Jamaica last year, said Carlisle Towery, president of the Greater Jamaica Development Corp.

“The bottom line is that the rezoning has definitely had a stimulative effect. The phone rings off the hook here. Of course, some are fishing expeditions; some are real developers, and some are people who own property

and think they have struck gold,” Towery said.

GJDC officials would also like to see an upsurge in housing construction within the rezoned area, noting that the nearby AirTrain light rail system makes it a very desirable location for airport workers. They’re likewise hoping that airline industry-related commercial development will also be attracted there.

South of the Long Island Rail Road/AirTrain complex on Sutphin Blvd., Jamaica-based developer Graham Associates is planning a two-phase project that includes the Marriott Courtyard and an adjacent tower with a 150,000-square-foot retail base and 348 units of affordable housing.

The project, planned for the block



An artist's rendering of the planned \$260M merchandise mart near Sutphin Blvd. in Jamaica.

bounded by Sutphin Blvd., 97th Ave., Waltham St. and 95th Ave., includes the first piece of property that Clinton Graham bought some 40 years ago, said Yesenia Graham, the daughter of the father/daughter team that makes up Graham Associates.

“It is wonderful to be able to create a hotel and a development where he first started,” Yesenia said.

Plans call for work to begin in about a year, with the \$70 million hotel up and running in 2½ years.

Diagonally across Sutphin Blvd., be-

tween 94th Ave. and 95th Ave., is the site of a proposed 13-story, \$260 million international merchandise mart, where a long-vacant, recently demolished meat-packing plant stood.

“We think our site is a tremendous opportunity to realize economic development objectives for Jamaica and we are very excited about it,” said Raffaella Dunne, a senior vice president of Washington Square Partners, developers for the merchandise mart site.

Construction of the new complex is to begin in the third quarter of this year and is scheduled to take about

three years.

Negotiations with Korean-based developers that would partner with Washington Square Partners on the project are still ongoing, Dunne said.

A former parking garage site that sits on Archer Ave. with its rear facing the LIRR tracks just across from 148th St. is being eyed by Chris Xu, owner of Flushing-based C&G Construction, for the Residence Inn and a second hotel.

However, said Xu, neither hotel is expected to open for at least three years.

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