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Plans on track for downtown Jamaica's Techno Mart

BY JONATHAN STARKEY

jonathan.starkey@newsday.com

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Construction on a 929,000- square-foot merchandise mart, the first large-scale product of the historic 386-block rezoning of downtown Jamaica, Queens, should begin on Sutphin Boulevard within the year, according to the Greater Jamaica Development Corp.

The \$260-million, 13-story mart, complete with 576,000 square feet of wholesale space and 176,000 square feet for national and local retail, is the first component of a larger development to be built around the mass transit nerve center in Jamaica.

It will replace an abandoned meatpacking plant across the street from the Jamaica train station, home to Long Island Rail Road's headquarters and the AirTrain terminal, a direct connection from Jamaica station to Kennedy Airport. The project, which will come with 800 parking spaces, is expected to create about 3,000 jobs.

"It's a major catalyst," said Carlisle Towery, president of Greater Jamaica. "We're working hard right now on a hotel, and housing, and retail and parking. It's very exciting."

Prime Construction Co. of South Korea will build the Techno Mart Queens, which is modeled on its Techno Mart in Seoul.

Construction on the complex should begin in the third quarter of 2008 and take roughly three years, Greater Jamaica said.

Gloria Black, chairwoman of Community Board 12, which covers Jamaica, spoke with hesitant optimism about the international mart.

"They've got to open the doors to the people of this community," she said. "We are looking for something quality, some employment. We don't have any work.

"A lot of our people need jobs."

The rezoning, one of the largest in city history, was approved Sept. 10 by the City Council. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said after its approval that the Jamaica plan should spawn the creation of 9,500 jobs, 5,200 housing units and 3 million square feet of office, retail and hotel space.

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