

Tech Mall To Replace Old Meat Plant



Demolition work is underway for the site that will house a 13-story building with a three-story mall. PRESS Photo by Ira Cohen

BY SASHA AUSTRIE

The incessant pounding of construction machinery demolishing an 88-year-old building could be heard on avenues and streets leading away from 94-01 Sutphin Blvd, but neighbors don't mind the noise or the tremors the construction brings. They eagerly await its outcome.

In three years, a 929,000-square-foot, 13-story building will rise from the rubble. There will be three floors of retail and 10 floors of wholesale, which will focus mainly on electronics.

Patrick Rodgers, a resident of 95th Avenue for approximately 30 years, said he first heard of the new addition to the neighborhood at a meeting held at the local community center.

"I think it is very good for the area," Rodgers said. "It will bring work to the area."

The \$260 million project, which is part of the rezoning of a 368-block swath of downtown Jamaica, is scheduled to bring 3,000 jobs to the vicinity.

"This project is an excellent example of what was envisioned by the Jamaica Plan Rezoning," New York City Economic Development Corporation President Robert Lieber said. "In addition to bringing an attractive international wholesale merchandise mart to Jamaica, it will also offer a home to local and national retailers and restaurants."

Merkel Properties, owned by Rita Stark, and JFK Center Associates have been in talks with regards to the property for more than a year. A 99-year lease was signed by JFK to rent the property in June 2006. The business venture is sponsored by Jamaica Capital Corporation, a foreign business corporation involved in the development of the project.

The Techno Mart, which will be dubbed JFK Corporate Square, will be located opposite the AirTrain. The project will be a joint venture by development consortium, which includes JFK Center Associates, LLC; Kingsbridge-Jamaica Co., HRH AC Development Group and Prime Construction Co. Ltd.

"This international center is the first component of the airport village development we are facilitating for AirTrain's environs," Greater Jamaica Development Corporation President Carlisle Towery said.

The Techno Mart is modeled on Prime's East Techno Mart in Seoul, South Korea. It will stand on the grounds of the demolished meatpacking plant, which has been vacant for more than 40 years. The demolition of the plant comes with the assistance of a \$4 million loan from the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

Demolition completion is slated for December and construction is scheduled for the third quarter of 2008. During the demolition a two-alarm fire resulted in a stop work order in September. The order was lifted Oct. 1.

JCC and JFK entered into an agreement that outlines the design of and restricts certain businesses from operating inside JFK Corporate Square.

The agreement reads in part, "JFK shall not enter into leases with retail subtenants that are not generally recognized by the shopping center industry as first class retail tenants engaged in high quality merchandise..." The list of unacceptable tenants includes Dollar/99 cents stores, sellers of pornographic material, independent non-national cell phone and independent electronic retailers.

Celerino Valencia of El Sol de Mexico Deli Grocery on Sutphin Boulevard said the Techno Mart would bring in more customers.

"It is a positive thing," Valencia said. "It brings in more jobs."

Jose Pedras owner of Sutphin Boulevard Liquors and Wines agreed with Valencia.

"It is okay," Pedras said. "More people are going to come."