

NEIGHBORHOOD JOURNAL

Hot dogs won't lack buns in Queens

Interstate Bakeries opts to keep Jamaica factory running, retaining hundreds of jobs

RESIDENTS OF Jamaica, Queens, can sleep soundly. Their buns are staying in the oven. After emerging from bankruptcy early this month, Interstate Bakeries Corp. wasted no time in trumpeting the glad tidings: Its Jamaica factory, the city's largest

maker of hot dog rolls, will remain open. The century-old plant on 268th Street and Douglas Avenue has about 350 full-time and more than 100 part-time workers. Its products are made under the Wonder Bread and Nature's Pride labels. "This was extraordinary news for us," says Richard Werber, direc-

tor of the business services group at the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. "We want to hold on to those manufacturing companies, because generally speaking, their jobs pay far better than retail jobs and provide a clearer and higher ladder for advancement."

About 70% of the plant's employees live in Queens, according to



GJDC data. Kansas City-based Interstate filed for Chapter 11 in 2004. It has closed several facilities in the Midwest, eliminating hundreds of jobs.

Though the Jamaica plant isn't Interstate's most advanced facility, New York is one of the company's largest markets, so keeping production here made

sense, according to Interstate.

As a bonus, New York ranks No. 1 in the nation's top 10 hot dog-eating cities, buying about \$113 million worth of franks a year, according to the National Hot Dog and Sausage Council's most recent survey. That's not surprising, given the Big Apple's multiple sports arenas, Coney Island's Nathan's Famous and an army of street vendors.

Queens also has bragging rights in that Shea Stadium beat out other Major League Baseball venues in the all-important hot dog sales standings, the council says. Mets fans ate more than 2 million dogs—with buns—last season, barely six miles from Interstate Bakeries' cargo bay.

—HILARY POTKEWITZ