

Beep OKs Jamaica rezoning

BY DONALD BERTRAND

WITH THE GOAL of making Jamaica “a far more beautiful place than it is now,” Borough President Helen Marshall last week gave her “conditional” approval to a controversial plan to rezone 368 blocks of Greater Jamaica.

Present conditions consist of “unattractive blocks with substandard economic activity, open auto-related uses and rundown buildings,” Marshall said.

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‘Conditional’ approval granted

The plan would allow for buildings of up to 25 stories to rise in the core area of downtown Jamaica around the AirTrain terminal.

The area is currently zoned for manufacturing. The new zoning would allow for commercial and/or residential development.

It would also allow eight- and 12-story buildings along Hillside Ave. and structures of up to seven stories along Merrick Blvd. and Jamaica Ave. east of the core area.

The area to be rezoned is generally bounded by the Van Wyck Expressway, Hillside Ave., 191st St., Liberty

Ave., 180th St., 178th St., Brinkerhoff Ave., Merrick Blvd., Guy R. Brewer Blvd. and Liberty Ave.

Community Board 8, which covers part of the affected area, voted unanimously against the plan, mainly because of the increased density and height that would be allowed along Hillside Ave., while Community Board 12, encompassing the other portion, was more divided on the proposal.

In giving her “conditional” okay, Marshall called for additional study of ways to improve the landscape of Hillside Ave., and for a modification

of the zoning along parts of Hillside Ave. to reflect the height and density of existing buildings.

She also said that developers who are allowed to build units with larger floor area — because they have agreed to build below-market-rate housing — must build their below-market-rate housing on the same site as any higher-priced units they build.

Additional parking should also be a part of any such development, the borough president said.

The Planning Commission was scheduled to hold a hearing on the matter this week at the Queens Library main branch on Merrick Blvd. at 10 a.m.

dbertrand@nydailynews.com