

Jamaica projects on track: Developers



Greater Jamaica Development Corporation director of planning Peter Engelbrecht updates CB 12 on current projects in southeast Queens. Photo by Ivan Pereira

By Ivan Pereira

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A weak economy may have delayed two projects aimed at improving downtown Jamaica, but developers said they are still moving forward with their plans.

The Greater Jamaica Development Corp. updated Community Board 12 May 19 about three developments that are in various stages.

Although two of the undertakings — a complete redesign of the transit hub at Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard and an extension of Atlantic Avenue — are still months away from construction, Peter Engelbrecht, Greater Jamaica's director of planning, design and capital projects, said he was confident they would be a reality.

Engelbrecht said construction on the Sutphin Underpass project has been moving along well and when it was ready would offer commuters and residents a new, mini shopping center that would enhance the area right near the Jamaica Long Island Rail Road and Air Train stations.

But progress was not the same for the remaining enhancement projects, according to Engelbrecht, because of funding issues. The Station Plaza transit project and the Atlantic Avenue construction were supposed to be funded by federal, state and city budgets, according to Jessica Pavone of the city Economic Development Corp., but the recession put those projects on hold.

"They are very complicated projects," she said.

Despite the economic situation, executives at Greater Jamaica, the non-profit community development organization focused on projects in downtown Jamaica, have been fine-tuning their ideas.

The Station Plaza plan, which is also still in the design phase, will affect Archer Avenue and completely redesign pedestrian, subway and bus access, according to Engelbrecht. Entrances into the Archer Avenue subway station will be moved to the north side of the block and the roadways will be widened to allow more traffic to get by, the director said.

Engelbrecht noted there have been several accidents involving pedestrians running across the street to catch their train or bus.

"The intersection is the worst intersection in Queens," he said.

The Atlantic Avenue undertaking would connect the street to 95th Avenue, allowing drivers to get off the Van Wyck Expressway. The road has been dangerous for both pedestrians and drivers for years, according to Engelbrecht.

Architects are still developing the logistics of the extension and are considering putting up a sign that welcomes visitors to downtown Jamaica, Greater Jamaica said in its report.

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