

## NEIGHBORHOOD JOURNAL

# Airport village taking off in Queens

## Hotels to anchor development around Jamaica AirTrain terminal

**A**LITTLE OVER A WEEK into spring, the long-awaited blossoming of an "airport village" in downtown Jamaica, Queens, looks like it will actually happen.

In the past month, developers have entered into separate agreements to build at least two major hotels near Jamaica's two-year-old AirTrain terminal. Both hotels will be under the Marriott flag, marking the first major chain to venture out past the airport along the AirTrain line.

"We've had this concept of an airport village for a while now," says Carlisle Towery, president of the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. "It's a very big step once you have a hotel [group] willing to operate here. It's a vote of confidence in the area."

The deals come less than six months after a massive rezoning of

downtown Jamaica upgraded the area around the AirTrain terminal to mixed-use, allowing commercial and residential projects on the once-industrial blocks where the new hotels are planned.

The largest of the hotels will be a Marriott Courtyard, planned for the corner of 95th Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, about a block south of the Jamaica Long Island Rail Road station. Plans call for a 172-room hotel, plus 348 units of middle-income housing and about 200,000 square feet of retail space.

Jamaica-based developers Graham Associates, a father-daughter team, own the 1.6-acre city block and are developing the site. They spent 10 months negotiating the deal with Marriott.

"Our hotel will be more custom-designed than other Marriott Courtyards people have seen," says Vice President Yesenia Graham. A large banquet hall, walls of win-

dows, green space and a sky lounge overlooking the lobby are some of the features planned for the hotel. Ms. Graham expects to break ground by the end of the year.

Nearby, on an 18,000-square-foot site on Archer Avenue, Flushing-based C&G Construction Group is developing two more hotels. One is likely to be a Marriott brand designed for longer residential stays. The hostelry will have about

150 rooms and be geared toward accommodating flight crews. Chris Xu, owner of C&G Construction, says he is also in talks with the Starwood Hotel Group to develop another 150-room hotel. A parking garage that formerly operated on the site is shuttered, and Mr. Xu says he will start demolition next month.

Successfully luring hotels downtown is an important milestone for the overall village plan. The hotels will not only provide jobs but will help boost local restaurants and re-

tailers by drawing more visitors.

"Hotels really anchor an area," says Mr. Towery. "They bring new people and new shopping patterns."

The residential component of the projects has Mr. Towery eyeing some of John F. Kennedy International Airport's 40,000 workers.

—HILARY POTKEWITZ



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