

It was not necessary to sacrifice Jamaica's residential neighborhoods to make this downtown Jamaica development happen. - Queens Civic Congress Executive Vice President Patricia Dolan who also chairs QCC's Land Use and Planning Committee. See QCC's statements on this in our [Media](#) section, including, [2007-09-13 Civic Congress urges no vote on Jamaica Plan](#)

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Make-over coming to Jamaica strip

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The long-awaited plan for an "airport village" in downtown [Jamaica](#) is ready for takeoff.

After a year of bureaucratic delays, officials Wednesday signaled the start of a \$12 million project to turn a "foreboding" stretch of sidewalk near the Jamaica train station into a commercial hub catering to commuters.

The project, hatched in 2002, is the first phase of a \$100 million economic revitalization of downtown Jamaica that aims tap into the area's importance as a key transit link to [JFK Airport](#).

The first phase, known as the Sutphin Underpass Project, will create 5,500 square feet of retail space by revamping the eastern side of a viaduct that carries the [Long Island Rail Road](#) over Sutphin Blvd., between Archer and 94th Aves.

"Jamaica, with its proximity to the airport and incredible transportation amenities, serves as the gateway to our city," [Deputy Mayor Robert Lieber](#) said in a statement. "The improvements to the Sutphin Underpass, as well as those planned throughout the area, will help make Jamaica a more attractive place to live, work and do business."

The Port Authority previously renovated the western side of the Sutphin Underpass into a gleaming terminal for the AirTrain. But the eastern stretch, with a series of gritty loading docks, was left untouched.

"Right now, it's a frightening, foreboding place that is not very well maintained," said [Peter Engelbrecht](#), an executive for the project's developer, the [Greater Jamaica Development Corp.](#)

The unsightly loading docks will be redesigned and turned away from the sidewalk, allowing for glass-front stores and a brighter, more pedestrian-friendly streetscape, Engelbrecht said.

A contractor is expected to be selected next week. Construction is expected to start in February and finish in July 2010.

The \$100 million downtown revitalization includes federal, state and city funding. It seeks to spur private development by redesigning the transit hub at Sutphin Blvd. and Archer Ave., where the LIRR, AirTrain, subways and bus routes converge.

"It will be a major turning point for Jamaica," said [Simone Price](#), executive director of the Sutphin Blvd. Business Improvement District.

The second phase, expected to start in 2010, will connect Atlantic Ave. with 95th Ave. to improve access from the Van Wyck Expressway to the transit hub.

The final stage, to begin the following year, will overhaul the intersection of Sutphin Blvd. and Archer Ave.

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