

# City unveils plan to spruce up Jamaica

BY IVAN PEREIRA

The city updated southeast Queens residents on its redevelopment plans for downtown Jamaica and also took comments on how the agency could make their neighborhood better during Community Board 12's monthly meeting last week.

Jessica Baker, of the city's Economic Development Corporation, presented the board with the first report from the Jamaica Plan Inter-agency Task Force on March 19.

The task force, which includes representatives from various city agencies, including the City Planning, Transportation and Parks and Recreation departments, discusses

the progress of development of the recently rezoned 350-block section of Jamaica and makes sure all projects work beneficially with residents.

"The rezoning put a spotlight on Jamaica since it was last rezoned in 1961," said Baker, the project manager for the development projects in Jamaica.

She outlined new plans in the works that would beautify the busy commercial area as well as improve its decaying street infrastructure. One of the projects will involve a major upgrade to Hillside Avenue from the Van Wyck Expressway to 191st Street, which Baker described as congested and in some parts dirty and broken.

"It's not a pedestrian friendly

environment," she said.

Starting in 2010, the city will begin planting trees along the sidewalk, installing new streetlights and catch basins that prevent flooding. The commercial area is not the only place getting a green makeover. Baker said the city also will be planting trees on Merrick Boulevard, Liberty Avenue and Jamaica Avenue.

The task force also has new plans to ease traffic conditions in the area by reworking parking rules within the neighborhood. The DOT conducted a survey of the street parking regulations around Jamaica Avenue and what the agency found surprised it enough to change some street restrictions, according to Baker.