

# Self-promotion urged for Jamaica

## Annual meeting of GJDC brings suggestions from council members

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As the determination to revitalize the community and improve the image of the downtown Jamaica area continues, the general consensus at the May 18 annual meeting of the Greater Jamaica Development Corp., held at the Jamaica Market, seemed to point to the need for increased self-promotion.

"There's a great story to be told down here," said Councilman Jim Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows), one of five council members who participated in a panel discussion on the topic, "Challenges Going Forward: Issues and Opportunities."

"We have the ability to make things happen. Let's get rid of the things that send the wrong signals. Fight the fight," Gennaro said.

"I have seen Jamaica grow a lot in the last 10 years," said Councilwoman Karen Koslowitz (D-Forest Hills). "We're not done yet. We're not an 'outer' borough; we have to make sure our borough is an 'other' borough that people can come to."

Koslowitz speculated that people who have negative misconceptions about Jamaica are those who don't live in the borough and have yet to be enlightened.

"We have to promote the great things we have here," said Councilman Ruben Wills (D-Jamaica), citing the presence of several area institutions, including York College and the YMCA, and "expanded relations



Councilman Ruben Wills, left, addresses the Greater Jamaica Development Corp. annual meeting last week at the Jamaica Market. Next to him is Councilman Leroy Comrie. PHOTO BY WALTER KARLING

with the police force."

Councilman Leroy Comrie (D-St. Albans) believes it's important to embrace the youth in the community and he would like to see a more diversified night life.

"We have a unique transportation hub. We need to stimulate as many people as possible to visit Jamaica," Comrie said, adding that there is a need to work with

developers who may want to come into the area.

"It is critical to come up with innovative ideas," he said.

Wills believes Jamaica has all the elements needed to attract department stores and that new retailers should move in "in a cooperative manner," without displacing existing businesses. He indicated a need to

make parking in the area more accessible. Gennaro called shopping the "lifeblood" of any neighborhood.

Pointing to the two airports that are in the borough, Koslowitz said, "There's no reason when people land in Queens they don't stay in Queens. They should look at Queens as a viable place with Jamaica as one of those viable places."

Councilman Mark Weprin (D-Oakland Gardens) agreed. "There's a lot going on in Jamaica. No question, Jamaica is something we should use as a major shopping hub. It's a great neighborhood. The question is how do we get others to know it?"

Comrie indicated that Jamaica needs to be a destination hub. "Tourists seem increasingly interested in visiting Queens," he said.

While acknowledging an increase in the area's hotels, he sees the need for one large "anchor hotel."

"We're in a negative economy," he said. "There's no development money out there. We must push the city to put up development money."

Koslowitz sees the need to create jobs including government jobs.

Comrie encouraged cooperation with the Port Authority on the desired expansions of the local airports, both of which he said are interested in additional landing strips. "Greater Jamaica should be the bell ringer" to ensure the success of the pro-

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## Annual Meeting

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Attending the meeting from the 103rd Precinct are Police Officer David Yu, left, Executive Officer Scott Stelmok and Detective Richard Lowe. PHOTO BY WALTER KARLING

jects, he said. The best way to develop the Airport Village is to "Promote! Promote! Promote!" he said.

Among the other issues touched on were the need to use human resources to help small businesses grow and to develop open green space in area parks. There is also a concern that Jamaica has more than its fair share of homeless shelters.

In addition, Comrie blamed the gov-

ernor for cutting summer youth programs in the area, admitting, "I don't know how much we'll be able to do" to increase summer employment for youngsters.

At the meeting, elections were held for members, directors and officers of the GJDC and excerpts from "Building the Heart of a Community," a new documentary film depicting the history of downtown Jamaica, were shown. □