

'Jamaica Center' Envisaged As Mini-Midtown Manhattan

By ROGER WETHERINGTON

A mini-midtown-Manhattan of office buildings, shops, schools and art centers would grow in Jamaica, Queens, under a plan released yesterday by the Regional Plan Association.

The association's long-awaited report, "Jamaica Center," called the site suitable for commercial development because of its transit network, vacant land and large surrounding population. It said a reversal of the area's decay would benefit the Negroes of South Jamaica, the city's third largest black community.

The 72-page report was prepared in consultation with residents of Jamaica and had been in the making for six months. According to the association, a number of its suggested improvements are "imminent." The first steps are or should be the following:

York College Site

- Location in South Jamaica of York College, the new four-year unit of the City University, as proposed by the Lindsay administration.

- Demolition of the Jamaica Ave. El as quickly as alternative facilities can be built. Although the Metropolitan Transportation Authority plans demolition within a decade, the "El trains should be eliminated much sooner than that," the report declared.

- Planning new transit lines and stations in accordance with the over-all plan for a Jamaica center. The transit improvements have already received a high priority from the MTA.

Mayor Favors Program

- Making the Jamaica center an early project of Gov. Rockefeller's State Urban Development Corp. "The Mayor favors the program," the report said, "and the Governor has the money and machinery to do the job."

York College and most of the transit improvements are expected quite soon, the association noted. There is also an effort being made to push forward the plans for demolition of the elevated. A number of businessmen have indicated an interest in relocating in Jamaica soon if the city and state will make their commitment clear.

According to the association, the number of office jobs in the metropolitan area will nearly double from 1.6 million in 1965 to 3 million by the year 2000. Two dozen urban centers like Jamaica are projected between Trenton and New Haven to accommodate the new jobs, since Manhattan can't handle them all.

Renewal Planned

Although some new centers will be created, others will be established by renewing and enlarging older centers like Jamaica,

downtown Brooklyn, Newark, Harlem, Jersey City and others.

The refurbished older centers will provide jobs and shopping for the surrounding Negro communities, strengthen the city's faltering tax base and keep middle-income whites in the cities, the association said.

For Jamaica, about 90,000 new office jobs are planned by the year 2000 and half that many within less than 20 years. Some new housing, health facilities, retail stores and arts centers are also projected.

The association said little relocation of residents or businesses would be required since a number of sites in the area are either vacant or only lightly used.

Jamaica in Center

Jamaica is in the middle of the borough's 2 million people and perhaps 250,000 office workers live within 30 minutes of the community by bus or subway.

The modernized Long Island Rail Road will put Jamaica within 12 minutes of Manhattan. The subway service from Queens Blvd. to Brooklyn will be extended soon to South Jamaica. Service to Kennedy Airport is also planned.