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Project of the Month: Hastings Capital cleans up distressed Jamaica site and renovates 8,000 s/f building: \$3.8 million project

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Shown above (from left) are: NYREJ publisher Adam Savino, Robert Birnbaum, and Dominic Caputo.

Queens, NY Hastings Capital, LLC is redeveloping an 8,000 s/f space in a rapidly changing area of downtown Jamaica. This site, located at 87-83 139th St., offers access to the Van Wyck Expy., Grand Central Pkwy., Queens Blvd. It is within walking distance to the Sutphin Blvd. station, Jamaica station, LIRR, and JFK AirTrain. Occupied by an electroplating shop since 1936, this site was the perfect candidate for Robert Birnbaum of Hastings, a developer active in the redevelopment of environmentally-distressed properties in New York City. Besides containing large amounts of electroplating solutions, scrap metal, heavy machinery, and refuse, years of neglect had left this building contaminated and in disrepair. Due to the age and work needed to the site, a gut rehabilitation was necessary with clean-up requirements set forth by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Before: 87-83 139th Street,
Jamaica - Queens, NY

After rendering: 87-83 139th Street,
Jamaica - Queens, NY

Amec Foster Wheeler (AFW) prepared a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Closure Plan which was submitted to and approved by the DEC. Groundwater and soil were tested throughout the process to determine their contamination levels, if any. Excavations were advanced to depths of 5 ft. below grade in one of the former plating areas and 11 ft. below grade in the other former plating area. Working with Innovative Recycling Technologies, a total of 1,357 tons of metal-impacted soil were removed and properly disposed of at a permitted facility . As the soil was being tested and removed, new footings were poured under the existing ones allowing the work crew to completely excavate the area, a complicated task undertaken by D. Caputo Contracting, Inc. The results of the groundwater analyses indicated that the metals from the plating shop solutions had not impacted the underlying groundwater. Based on the laboratory results and the extent of excavation work performed at the site, the DEC determined that no further action was required.

When asked about this project, Eric Weinstock of AFW said, "I take pride in working at properties that have been degraded by the operations of historic industries and transforming them into buildings that can once again be productive to society."

Rather than refill the area with new soil, Hastings is considering using the newly excavated space as a basement with 10' ceilings, increasing the interior space by 3,000 s/f and offering greater flexibility to a prospective tenant.

Structural work was needed throughout the existing building, the most extensive of which was replacing the entire north side wall. "It's basically a whole new building built around some of the existing structure," said Bob Birnbaum of Hastings. After completely gutting the second floor, it was converted to one large office with a bullpen and renovated bathroom. Electrical service and HVAC were updated throughout the building.

Interior work at 87-83 139th Street,
Jamaica - Queens, NY

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Perhaps the most striking change to this building is the completely new façade. A hallmark of Birnbaum's projects, attention to detail shines throughout the new brickwork. Gone is the minimal red-brick exterior, replaced with weathered, stone-colored bricks in various patterns giving the exterior a sense of depth and elegance. A four ft. parapet was also added to the top, and marble coining around the edges to give the façade a more finished look. New picture windows will allow twice as much light in as the standard windows they are replacing while being more efficient.

Keith Cordova of JM2 Architecture said, "I met with Mr. Birnbaum once a week to review concepts for designs and goals to achieve. At each meeting, he would present items of inspiration and ideas for the next iteration. Each façade restoration must be timeless, powerful and unique to one another. These projects involve everlasting elements such as stone, copper, and multiple brick patterns to address the façade, complementing the form and fenestration. The end result must have balance. No element is to take away from any other part of the design as a whole. The attention to detail for each project with Mr. Birnbaum ensures the end result is flawless."

Total cost of renovations is currently \$3.8 million, but expected to rise as the July completion date approaches.

87-83 139th Street Project Team

Developer: Hastings Capital, LLC

Masonry Contractor: D. Caputo Contracting, Inc.

Hazardous Waste Management: Innovative Recycling Technologies

Remediation Engineer: Amec Foster Wheeler

Electrical Contractor: Milicia Electric

Architect: JM2 Architects, P.C.

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