

# NEW YORK POST

## HIGH ON HARLEM

By TOM TOPOUSIS

*October 8, 2008 --*

City lawmakers yesterday cleared the way for a sprawling, \$700 million redevelopment of mostly vacant lots along 125th Street in East Harlem that will include an office tower, shops and housing - the biggest new project to hit the neighborhood in decades.

The project, which also includes a hotel, a cultural center and a new public plaza, will accelerate the commercial redevelopment of Harlem's business corridor, which has been a major goal of the Bloomberg administration.

With City Council approval of zoning changes in hand, economic-development officials announced the selection of a team of seven developers who are expected to break ground on the first phase of the project, including housing and retail, in 2009.

One of the developers, General Growth Properties, operates the South Street Seaport. The company has also proposed a sweeping redevelopment of that waterfront, despite growing concerns about the firm's economic viability.

But city officials believe that the team of developers has the resources and incentive to push ahead with the Harlem project, which will be rolled out in phases. And the city, which owns 82 percent of the 7.5 acres, won't turn it over until financing is in place.

Mayor Bloomberg said the development, called the East Harlem Media, Entertainment and Cultural Center, will "help cement 125th Street as 'Harlem's Main Street' and the cultural and retail hub of upper Manhattan."

The tract covers three city blocks between 125th and 127th streets, from Third to Second avenues. Of the 800 units of housing, 600 will be developed as affordable to moderate and middle-income families.

In addition to 4,000 construction jobs, the city expects the development, which is being paid for with private money, will generate 1,500 permanent jobs in the office tower, hotel and shops.

"This is really an exciting moment for East Harlem in particular and also for the city of New York," said Councilwoman Melissa Mark Viverito, who represents the

district. "We're talking about living-wage jobs for the neighborhood with benefits and possibly union jobs as well."

Along with housing, the project includes a 30,000-square-foot community and cultural center.

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