

This just shows the folly of the short-sighted “Jamaica Plan” imposed by City Hall using its perquisites and hammers to buy or scare off enough people to get it through the City's zoning review processes. City policies should bolster and enhance what it finds on the ground rather than throw it all in a blender for a new mix that few find tasteful.

[http://www.nydailynews.com/ny\\_local/queens/2009/01/15/2009-01-15\\_sales\\_not\\_luring\\_shoppers\\_back\\_construct.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/queens/2009/01/15/2009-01-15_sales_not_luring_shoppers_back_construct.html)

**DAILY NEWS** | Queens

## **Sales not luring shoppers back: construction, economy hurting Jamaica Center**

BY CLARE TRAPASSO

Thursday, January 15th 2009, 11:45 AM

THRONGS OF shoppers still crowd the bustling [Jamaica Center](#) shopping district, but merchants say business has declined at an alarming rate despite hefty markdowns.

The area surrounding [Jamaica Ave.](#) has become a shopping destination known for its rock-bottom prices. But merchants said they have been seeing fewer charter buses filled with out-of-town shoppers.

"Look at the empty store," said [Zakir Hossain](#), 38, the owner of Tip Top Beauty Products and Hosiery on 165th St. "It's bad, bad, very bad."

Hossain said his business fell about 70% in 2008.

To lure customers, he lowered prices on several items, including hats and underwear. But it hasn't made much of a difference.

"Nobody has money," he said.

That sentiment was echoed by vendors like Jahson Chin, 36, who hawks scented oils and soaps on 165th St.

"Last year was terrible and this year it was ugh," said Chin, comparing his 2007 and 2008 sales.

His customers are now buying smaller, less expensive bottles of oil, Chin said.

[Brian Luna](#), 31, a chimney specialist from [Queens Village](#), said since the economic downturn, he's cut back on spending.

"I don't buy it unless it's on sale," said Luna, who bought boots and jeans on New Year's Eve. "The only reason I came out today was because of the sale."

[Brigit Pinnell](#), director of the [Jamaica Center Improvement Association](#), a nonprofit group that supports local businesses, maintained the area is still busy even with the economic downturn.

"All retail businesses have taken a hit," she said. "We're not exempt from what's going on."

[Thomas Crater](#), 63, who greets the charter buses for the association, said he used to see as many as 50 buses each weekend.

The buses would come from upstate, [Washington, D.C.](#), [Baltimore](#) - even as far away as [Atlanta](#) and [Nova Scotia](#) - filled with shoppers looking for deep discounts.

"But in the last couple years, it's been down to about 25 to 30 buses," Crater lamented.

He blamed the slowdown on parking problems - not the ailing economy.

"We had a tremendous amount of construction in Jamaica," he said. "That's one reason the buses didn't come - they didn't have any place to park."

Crater said he believes once bus companies know the construction is complete, they will come back.

But [Moe Mizrahi](#), 25, who manages Toy Warehouse on Jamaica Ave., was not as hopeful.

He said his business dropped more than 50% last month.

"There's no business out there," Mizrahi said. Customers are "just spending money on what they need - not toys."