

# DAILY NEWS

## Developer withdraws BJ's plans

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THE BRONX BATTLE over a proposed BJ's Wholesale Club ended yesterday with a retreat rather than outright defeat in the City Council.

But the war over nonunion big-box stores trying to make inroads across the city is far from over.

Just hours before the full Council was expected to vote overwhelmingly against the BJ's project, its developer, the Related Cos., withdrew an application for zoning changes and other required land-use approvals.

"They committed suicide rather than wait to be executed," said Richard Lipsky, a consultant and lobbyist who helped spearhead the fierce opposition to the 130,000-square-foot BJ's store proposed for a site on Brush Ave. on the edge of Soundview and Castle Hill.

Much of the opposition was fomented by union leaders, who contended that the BJ's nonunion chain of 151 stores is anti-union and would be damaging to unionized stores in the Bronx and the rest of the city.

Unions leaders also saw the Bronx BJ's battle as a prelude of the all-out war they've declared against a possible incursion into the city by the even larger non-union Wal-Mart chain, which has been considering a site in Rego Park, Queens.

"For the labor movement, I think it's a big victory," Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin (D-Queens) said of the BJ's development.

McLaughlin is president of the New York City Central Labor Council and an organizer of a union-business coalition fighting a possible Wal-Mart entry into the city.

Jesse Masyr, a lawyer for the Related Cos., left open the likelihood that a revised application for the Bronx site will be made in the future.

Under the city's Uniform Land Use Review Process, the Council has the final approval on such projects.

"We've heard the concerns, be it that they came very late, from the Council," Masyr commented. "We're going to see how we can deal with that."

Council opponents of the BJ's project had contended the developer failed to conduct adequate traffic and environmental impact studies. Members of the Land Use Committee voted 13-0 last week to reject the approvals requested by the Related Cos.

But Councilwoman Madeline Provenzano (D-East Bronx), who represents the district where BJ's would have arisen, said the stated reasons for denying the zoning changes were "a smoke screen."

"It was a union issue . . . played out in the wrong arena," she said.

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