

LATE SPORTS

New York Newsday

EDITION

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 1995 • 50 CENTS

NEW YORK FORUM

ABOUT PATHMARK

Should Goliath Get a Tax Break?

By Alfredo Rodriguez

PATHMARK WOULD LIKE to build a 53,000-square-foot supermarket on a vacant block of city-owned land in East Harlem. The fate of the project rests in the hands of the Manhattan Borough Board.— including City Council members from Manhattan, borough president Ruth W. Messinger and the head of Community Board 11, Edward L. Baca. It will vote on the project on Thursday, but if editorial writers were voting, the outcome wouldn't be in doubt. According to these armchair experts, East Harlem is an

underserved neighborhood and its consumers are being ripped off by merchants selling appalling produce at outrageous prices.

Let me take exception to this chorus of uncritical approval for a new Pathmark — and even stronger exception to the disparaging remarks about existing neighborhood supermarkets. I take this demonization personally because I own two supermarkets in East Harlem.

I have invested my life's savings in these stores. When I bought them they were run-down eyesores, but I've spent more than a million dollars renovating the buildings and restocking the shelves. Hours of discussion with community groups and consumers helped me understand what the neighborhood needed.

My personal marketing studies, far from being the work of a bewildered newcomer, were meant to bolster an understanding cultivated over a life-

Alfredo Rodriguez owns Associated Supermarkets in New York.



time. When I immigrated to this country from the Dominican Republic at the age of 5, my family settled in Corona. I grew up in this predominantly Hispanic community and worked in the local bodegas be-

fore I graduated to managing one of the neighborhood supermarkets. When I acquired enough knowledge and capital I purchased my own supermarket on 116th Street in El Barrio.

In every way possible, I speak the language of East Harlem. That's why I believe it's my obligation to give back to the neighborhood that nurtured me. I hire people from the community, mentor aspiring entrepreneurs, contribute to countless local organizations and serve as a member of the community board. For me, giving back is not a public relations gimmick — it is a way of recognizing my own roots.

There are 13 other supermarkets in East Har-

— Continued on page A36