

DAILY NEWS

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Moving megastores forward

By **WALTER L. McCAFFREY**

LAST WEEK, the City Council overwhelmingly rejected Mayor Giuliani's megastore plan after our efforts to negotiate an improved plan broke down.

The changes sought by the Council would have enhanced the mayor's proposal significantly, making it more palatable to New Yorkers who are concerned about the impact of large retail development on their neighborhoods.

Fundamentally, both sides have similar goals: to help stimulate the local economy by creating new jobs and capturing a larger share of the retail sales leaving the city for suburban stores.

In addition, the Council has made priorities of protecting neighborhoods, preserving the vitality of commercial strips and limiting the impact on manufacturing areas.

But with the mayor's plan now officially dead, the question remains: Where do we go from here? The answer: *forward*. The train is leaving the station. In the next few months, at the direction of Speaker Peter Vallone, the Council will put forward its own megastore proposal.

Large retailers already have come to the city and will continue to locate here in years to come. Attracting them is important. However, future opportunities for development must be consistent and orderly and reflect the particular characteristics of our neighborhoods.

Rather than embrace a poorly prepared proposal that resembles the work

of a butcher wielding a meat ax, the Council's plan will reflect the distinct needs of the city. Like a surgeon with a scalpel, we'll protect the interests of all New Yorkers with our more deliberative approach.

Instead of permitting as-of-right development of megastores of up to 200,000 square feet, the Council proposes paring them down to 125,000 square feet. This will result in more

*The Council will
make it happen.
Here's how*

manageable stores.

To address traffic congestion, the Council will use arterial highways as the measure to determine where megastores may be sited. And by including sound urban design guidelines, our proposal will prevent megastores from becoming neighborhood nuisances.

To insure consistency, all retailers will be treated alike. There is no reason Home Depot or Toys "R" Us should be treated differently from Kmart or Macy's. Size rather than category should determine a store's zoning treatment.

Our constituents build these stores, work in them and seek the expanded shopping opportunities they offer. The

Council recognizes that a desire exists to bring in more of these stores. So as we move forward, what are the ingredients for developing a successful plan?

■ Cooperation is essential. Fingering will get us nowhere. The Council and administration should work together.

■ Deliberate and measured action is needed. Petulant public policy is pathetically poor public policy.

■ Perhaps most important is the inclusion of a neighborhood perspective. The vast practical knowledge of Council members and community leaders should be embraced in this process rather than shunned. Who knows a neighborhood better than its Council members and local leaders? This common-sense perspective cannot be cast aside when considering the future of neighborhoods.

■ Finally, we must have a comprehensive economic development strategy that considers the needs of all types of businesses. Rather than focus just on the large retailers, an equally aggressive policy to improve manufacturing and revitalize existing commercial strips must be pursued.

Using these elements as our guide, the Council intends to transform this megamishap into a positive plan for everyone to embrace. We welcome the participation of all, including the Giuliani administration, in this process.

McCaffrey (D-Woodside) heads the City Council's subcommittee on zoning and franchises.