

# Outcry Of Megastore Opposition

## Hearings on mayor's plan

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Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's plan to ease the path for "megastores" in industrial zones ran into heavy community opposition as hearings opened yesterday in City Hall.

A long line of speakers, ranging from Queens Borough President Claire Shulman's top deputy to residents living near the site of a proposed superstore in Forest Hills, urged the City Planning Commission to change the plan.

Giuliani administration officials indicated they would be willing to bend but would fight to keep the bulk of the proposal, which would rezone vast manufacturing tracts to permit "big box" stores as large as 200,000 square feet. It is expected to go before the City Council later this year.

"There is room for discussion and negotiation," Deputy Mayor Fran Reiter said after testifying. But she minimized community opposition, saying, "Communities like to say no to things. That's not unusual."

Giuliani's goal is to stem the flow of New York City shoppers to the suburbs by making it easier to build giant stores in manufacturing zones. His administration estimates the city could collect \$100 million more in sales tax a year, with 13,000 jobs in 57 new stores over the next decade.

Once it clears the planning panel, the proposal goes before the City Council, where heavy opposition from community boards and neighborhood shopping districts is likely to resonate.

Opponents complained that the proposal, which the mayor announced in April, would strip communities of their role in reviewing plans for shopping malls and huge retail stores. Some said the amount of land to be rezoned should be smaller and more carefully chosen.

Peter Magnani, Shulman's deputy, called the plan "broad-brush" and objected that it could lead to unwanted development along the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, Ditmars Boulevard, Metropolitan Avenue and Woodhaven Boulevard.

The plan arrived in City Hall with a thumbs-down from communities around the city. Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger said 27 of the 37 community boards to consider it and the five borough boards voted against the proposal.

She urged changes in the plan to avoid "an Oklahoma land rush for superstores."

Owners of small businesses contended superstores would siphon off customers, damaging neighborhood shopping districts. "The proposal is nothing but myth and assumptions," said Sung Soo Kim, president of The Small Business Congress of New York City, a Flushing-based group representing 130,000 shopkeepers.

But the Community Food Resource Center, an advocacy group for the poor, supported the mayor's plan to make it easier to develop large supermarkets. Pam Fairclough said it would lower food prices for the poor, who she said pay high prices at small markets under the control of large chains.

Some manufacturers turned out to oppose the plan.

Mark Kupferberg, a vice-president of Kepco, Inc., which makes high-tech electronic instruments in Flushing, said the arrival of superstores in a manufacturing zone can raise rents.

"Our landlord has already lined up a retail tenant who will pay five times the rent we currently pay," he said, noting that the business is adjacent to a Home Depot store. Current zoning prevents retail use of his site, he said.