

DAILY NEWS

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Deal eases nabe fears on Bx. mall

IT'S FAR FROM perfect. Still, the community benefits agreement between the Related Companies and the community surrounding the Bronx Terminal Market development project announced yesterday by Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión makes the Gateway Center a more palatable pill.

According to Carrión's office, the agreement has been in the works for almost a year. It was finalized, as he and the Bronx delegation wanted, before yesterday's City Council Land Use Committee vote of 49 in favor, with one against and one abstention.

"Good economic development happens when the community is a recognized, involved stakeholder in the process," he said. "The community benefits agreement will ensure that Bronx residents will benefit from the investment in and redevelopment of their neighborhood."

It's only fair. The South Bronx is one of the poorest communities in the country, and the least the Related Companies can do is to give something back to its neigh-

bors. After all, the huge developer is poised to make many millions with the Gateway Center.

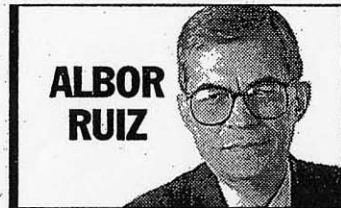
The center will be located where the Bronx Terminal Market is now, under the Major Deegan Expressway, south of Yankee Stadium. It will be surrounded by a community where about 58% of the residents are on public assistance and 40,000 people receive food stamps.

Obviously, not many of the center's neighbors would be able to afford to patronize the new luxury mall slated to be built in their midst.

Yet, as Councilman Hiram Monserrate (D-Corona, Queens), a consistent critic of the Gateway project, said yesterday after abstaining at the Council vote, "the agreement has some good things for the community."

According to a statement released by Carrión's office, "the detailed agreement,

the first of its kind in the Bronx, will provide job opportunities for neighborhood and boroughwide residents through the Bronx at Work initiative, contracting opportunities for local Bronx business through the Buy Bronx program and an environmental component that will guarantee that construction and operation of the facility will comply with high environmental standards."



**ALBOR
RUIZ**

One of the most controversial issues is the almost certain opening of a BJ's Wholesale Discount Club at the

Gateway Center. It's controversial not only for the company's anti-union policies, but also because it charges a \$45 membership fee, an astronomical figure for many South Bronx residents. And because, as a matter of policy, it does not accept food stamps or subsidies under the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) pro-

gram, which makes it all but impossible for the community to benefit from its discounted prices.

Yet Carrión announced that the Related Companies has agreed to pay half the membership fees for 1,000 neighborhood families "should a retailer that charges yearly fees operate in the development."

Also, the developer will guarantee that residents who receive food stamps or WIC will be able to use their subsidies "at any warehouse shopping club at the development."

The news is as good as possible under the circumstances, except for the 32 hard-working merchants and hundreds of their employees who work at the Bronx Terminal Market and who are in imminent danger of losing their livelihoods. No word about them in the borough president's message.

"This is a matter that is still being negotiated," said Gabriela Remigio, Carrión's deputy press secretary.

Let's hope for the best.

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