

# DAILY NEWS

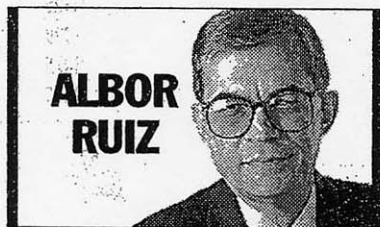
## Nix Bronx mall deal — not market

**T**HE FATE of the Bronx Terminal Market, which the city wants to raze so that a billionaire developer can build a high-end shopping mall in its place, is one of those telling ironies so common under Mayor Bloomberg.

It is ironic that the livelihoods of 23 hardworking wholesale merchants and hundreds of their employees are being sacrificed so that Stephen Ross, the head of The Related Companies, can make a few more million.

And it is even more ironic that the \$395 million Gateway Center, as the new mall will be called, has shown such a lack of respect to its surrounding community — even before it is built.

The Terminal Market, located under the Major Deegan Expressway south of Yankee Stadium, is the largest seller of ethnic and tropical produce on the East Coast. It offers a variety of products of the only-in-New York kind.



**ALBOR  
RUIZ**

But Ross, one of New York's biggest developers, is a former business partner of Mayor Bloomberg's economic adviser, Dan Doctoroff. He struck a secret agreement with the city to build the gleaming, luxurious new mall — what many think was a no-bid sweetheart deal.

"We may be standing in Wal-Mart right now," Stanley Meyer said gloomily some time ago as he stood inside Siegmund Strauss, the sprawling meat and poultry outlet he has owned since 1976 at the Bronx Terminal Market. It has 30 employees.

But Meyer, who is the president of the Bronx Terminal Market Preservation Association, founded more than a year ago to fight the city's efforts to eliminate the market, was mistaken.

In fact, it is a BJ's wholesale discount store that could be built where Siegmund Strauss now stands. BJ's is the same company that in 2004 abandoned its bid to open a store in the West Bronx in the face of opposition over zoning issues and its nonunion shop status. It is a dire prospect.

Think of it this way: You are one of the many struggling residents of the South Bronx, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country, which is 54% Hispanic and 41% African-American. You have overcome the multiple roadblocks and have endured the humiliation the hungry in this city have to suffer to get food stamps.

And now, the big new discount store in your neighborhood not only does not accept them but demands \$45 from you as a membership fee just to allow you in the store. All this at a time when the city is trying to increase the number of food stamp beneficiaries. Talk about irony.

Clearly, to open a BJ's wholesale discount store — whose business practices are so obviously contemptuous of poor New Yorkers — in one of the country's poorest communities would show either abysmal ignorance or inexcusable disregard for the people of the South Bronx.

To place a luxury shopping mall and a store like BJ's in a community whose income levels hover at around \$26,000 a year — at least 25% below the citywide income median — would be like rubbing salt in an open wound.

Yet the Gateway Center project has enjoyed an easy ride through the land use review process so far, although there are some unresolved issues as Feb. 8 — the day the City Council is scheduled to take its final approval — approaches.

As the Daily News has reported, the Bronx Council delegation and Borough President Adolfo Carrión want Related to sign a community benefit agreement before Feb. 8. The displaced merchants' fates are still up in the air, and there are multiple concerns about traffic congestion and the economic impact on local merchants.

On Feb. 8, the Council should do the right thing and close the door on this sweetheart deal known as the Gateway Center.

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