

Wal-Mart not in mall plan for Bronx market

Property owner mum on tenants, but wants to lease to club store with local presence

CITY HALL After more than a year of contention and speculation, the developer of a planned \$394 million suburban-style mall at the Bronx Terminal Market

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But questions continued to swirl around the Gateway Center project after a hearing by the City Council subcommittee on zoning and franchises yesterday. Answers could be forthcoming tomorrow, as the proposal moves on to

another hearing of the Council's land use committee. A full City Council vote — the last hurdle for the project — may happen as soon as Feb. 1.

Troubled history

When the plan for a mall and convention center was unveiled in late 2004, questions revolved around the city's deal with the politically connected developer. Critics wondered why the city had guaranteed to reimburse all of the Related Co.'s costs if the project fell through. This partnership was sweetened with millions in tax breaks.

The saga then shifted focus to the plight of the 23 wholesale food merchants who had

Chelsea in the South Bronx?

- The merchants of the Bronx Terminal Market have grabbed on to a new proposal by developer Irwin Cohen, who wants to turn a city-owned site adjacent to the Gateway Center into a mixed-use food co-operative like the Chelsea Market. "It's a win-win for everyone," said merchant Stanley Mayer. METRO

operated in the Bronx Terminal Market for generations. The city had offered an \$8 million relocation package that mostly consisted of low-interest loans. The vendors complained the deal was inadequate to stay together as a market.

Labor unions began to pick on the plan for its massive, 11-million square feet of retail space, which they feared would suit only a big-box

retailer like Wal-Mart or B.J.'s. Both stores have become targets of unions and community groups who want to keep them out of the city for their non-union, low-wage employment practices. B.J.'s also requires a \$45 annual membership fee, and it won't accept food stamps.

Continuing saga

"There are no plans to include a Wal-Mart or a Sam's Club in

Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market," said Related spokesman David Stearns. "But the Related Cos. would like to include a warehouse shopping club in the mall."

"They have a lease with B.J.'s," said Richard Lipsky of the Neighborhood Retail Alliance, which represents the market's merchants. Lipsky claims he heard that B.J.'s would be the anchor tenant at the mall from two other retailers who looked at the plans. Related's Stearns said, "I can't confirm or deny that."

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