

To the editor,

Re, "A low Point Hit By Council"

In his misinformed column on the defeat of an application to build a BJ's Warehouse Club in the Bronx, Andrew Wolf makes a number of observations, some erroneous, others logically inconsistent.

Wolf's biggest mistake is to assume, we say assume because it is clear that he relied exclusively on published reports and questionable statements attributed to the local councilmember, that the City Council's Land Use Committee only voted against this project because BJ's is unrelentingly anti-labor. This clearly is not so and does an injustice to Land Use Chair Melinda Katz and her entire committee.

The fact is that opponents spent tens of thousands of dollars on a traffic analysis demonstrated that, once again, a developer was putting out self-serving information that drastically underestimated the traffic impacts on the community. In addition, unlike the developer, opponents presented a 30 page economic impact analysis that, by speaking to the project's socioeconomic effects and neighborhood impact, went to the heart of the criteria that made up the land use review.

Wolf, while ignoring the facts, still wants to have it both ways. He chastises the Council for looking at labor issues that he believes should be outside the purview of a land-use review. Demonstrating that he enjoys being as inconsistent as he is wrong, Wolf then argues that the project should be approved because of the high unemployment in Bronx County, clearly an issue not germane to the review criteria.

The entry of box stores in New York City needs the most rigorous review possible. An in-depth analysis of their costs as well as their benefits needs to be undertaken, one that is not done under the aegis of a self-serving developer.

BJ's went down to defeat because the Related Companies, the developer of the site, assumed that its exalted status and quasi-nepotistic relationship with the administration would allow it to present, with impunity, the flimsiest evidence in defense of their project. Perhaps next time they will know better.

BJ's was defeated on the basis of convincing data that its impact would be bad for the Bronx. In one sense, though, Wolf may be on to something. The land use review process. Much like a criminal proceeding focuses not only on the evidence but also the character of the applicant/ "defendant." When the applicant is viewed as a bad actor the evidence will be viewed through that prism. In this view, BJ's was deservedly convicted.