

riverdale **REVIEW**

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Stella D'oro shopping mall on track for fall opening

By **MIAWLING LAM**

Parts of Riverdale Crossing, the \$80 million shopping mall located at the former Stella D'oro cookie factory, could open its doors by as early as October.

Metropolitan Realty Associates president Joseph A. Farkas said the two-story mall would most likely be unveiled in two stages—the north building will open first, with BJ's Wholesale Club set to follow suit a month later.

Farkas revealed the revised completion dates during a brief one-on-one interview with the Riverdale Review last week.

"We're shooting for October for the little building and mid-November for BJ's. We're trying to get in before Thanksgiving—that's our goal," he said.

Once opened, BJ's Wholesale Club will anchor the 165,255-square-foot shopping center, occupying more than 118,000 square feet in the south building on West 237th Street.

All spaces in the north building should also be fully leased and built before fall, Farkas said, but due to co-tenancy clauses in the leasing agreements, businesses may choose to wait for BJ's to open before serving eager shoppers.

National retailer Petco, banking institution Bank of America and casual sports-themed restaurant Buffalo Wild Wings Grill & Bar have already signed leases to occupy space in the north building.

"The project is moving along. We just poured concrete, 400 yards, in the ground this week for the north building," Farkas said.

Farkas declined to single out any other future retailers by name but provided a hint of what could come when asked what

industries the businesses were in.

"It's a combination of service vendors and restaurateurs," he said.

"We want to bring the project further along so people can visualize what we're building, and then we anticipate papering the neighborhood and letting people know what's available. And so we hope there will be a nice mix of national and local tenants."

Meanwhile, Farkas, who made a surprise appearance at last Tuesday's Community Board 8 traffic and transportation committee meeting, allayed residents' fears that Putnam Avenue West would be turned into a commercial truck route.

Locals originally feared that BJ's delivery trucks would be directed onto Putnam Avenue West after taking the Van Cortlandt Park South exit off the Major Deegan Expressway.

However, Farkas said the traffic plan has evolved and that was no longer the case. Instead, he said, trucks would now travel up the Major Deegan Expressway, take the West 230th Street exit, travel north on Bailey Avenue, turn left onto West 238th Street and take a ramp into the mall to unload. Up to 500 free parking spaces will also be provided at the site.

"Children's safety is most important to us," he said, after hearing the concerns of around a dozen parents who live in the area.

"I am very respectful of your situation. There's nothing that we would ever want to do to adversely impact your neighborhood."

Farkas said BJ's would make deliveries only during off-peak overnight hours, while trucks serving businesses in the north building would make their deliveries using a new cul-de-sac at

West 237th and Broadway.

Riverdale Crossing is expected to generate around 325 full-time equivalent retail jobs and 500 union construction jobs.

Metropolitan Realty Associates purchased the site of the former Stella D'oro factory for \$18.75 million in August 2011.



Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz hands Riverdale resident Helene Afon a check for \$5,000. She lost her husband of 52 years in a fire which destroyed her home.