

NO S-MALL EVENT



Gateway Center's first tenant, Home Depot, is set to open its doors in a few weeks.

Photo by Enid Alvarez

Home Depot opening to kick off new \$500M Gateway Center

BY BILL EGBERT

WHILE CREWS still work on finishing touches on the three-year project, the first store in the new Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market is due to open within the next two weeks.

Home Depot has already hired most of the 200 employees for the home improvement store.

A second anchor tenant, Target, is slated to open in July, and BJ's Wholesale Club plans to open in August. Another 16 confirmed tenants are set to open stores between May and the center's grand opening in September.

Other big names that have signed leases include Toys "R" Us, Staples, Best Buy, Marshalls and Bed Bath & Beyond.

The Related Cos., developer of the \$500 million mall on the site of the decrepit Bronx Terminal

Market at E. 149th St. and River Ave., said it hasn't had much trouble finding tenants, even in this slow economy.

"We're about where we were hoping to be at this point in construction," said Glenn Goldstein, president of Related Retail. "Today, we're closing in on 90% preleased."

He said much of the tenant leasing was done before the economic troubles began last fall.

While the estimated 2,900 construction jobs are ending, Related expects to bring 2,100 permanent retail jobs to an area with higher unemployment than the city average.

The Gateway Center project has not been without controversy, as it ousted the existing ethnic food merchants at the old Bronx Terminal Market. Area residents still worry that traffic to the center will aggravate already high asthma rates.

To secure approval for the project, Related signed the borough's first community benefits agreement in 2006.

Critics of the CBA complain too many of the provisions were voluntary or "aspirational," but at least one point was written into a tenant's lease.

BJ's Wholesale Club, which does not accept food stamps at most of its stores nationwide, must accept them at the Gateway store.

The discount warehouse club also plans to offer a number of half-price membership cards to low-income local residents, though BJ's says the exact number hasn't been decided.

Local groups and elected officials insisted on the concessions, since the shopping center is being built in the poorest urban county in the nation with a low-cost, long-term lease on city-owned land that some officials have called a "sweetheart deal."

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Children's museum gets a push forward

BY TANYANIKA SAMUELS

THE PUSH to bring a children's museum to the Bronx just got a multimillion dollar shot in the arm — and a possible home.

The borough president's office has committed \$2.8 million toward the construction of the Bronx Children's Museum.

It's long overdue, said Acting Borough President Earl Brown.

"The Bronx Children's Museum will be an extraordinary addition to the borough," he said. "This is a great investment in the Bronx and in children throughout the city."

Among the potential locations being looked at is an abandoned two-story building on the waterfront near the Bronx Terminal Market at 153rd St. that is being renovated by the city parks department.

Initial plans call for an interactive museum that highlights the history and diversity of the Bronx. Organizers envision a place where children can develop language and literacy skills through fun activities.

"We're putting emphasis on preschoolers and preparing them for entry into school," said Hope Harley, president of the Bronx Children's Museum board.

Children's museums can play an important role in a child's development, so bringing one to the Bronx will be a big plus, said Bill Aguado, who heads the Bronx Council on the Arts and is a Bronx Children's Museum board member.

"Children's museums are uniquely qualified to attend to young children's needs," Aguado said. "They provide interactive learning experiences that . . . help children acquire important life skills."

The Bronx is the city's "youngest" borough, with 30% of its 1.4 million residents being under age 18. Yet, the borough is the only one in the city without a children's museum.

In 2005, Borough President Adolfo Carrión spearheaded the effort to build a Children's Museum in the Bronx.



Artist's rendering shows plans for Bronx Children's Museum. The borough president's office has committed \$2.8 million toward the effort, and several sites in the boro are being eyed for the institution.

Since then, organizers have formed a board of directors, launched a pilot program and gained nonprofit status.

Organizers estimated that the museum's debut could come by spring 2012 if planning and construction timelines went smoothly.

However, Bronxites don't have to wait that long for the children's museum experience, Harley said.

Starting next month, museum offi-

cialists will roll out workshops and special activities at the Hunts Point Alliance for Children. And organizers plan to expand these offerings, and more, to other sites in the coming months.

"We want children and their families across the Bronx to be able to enjoy the museum experience even before we have a permanent site," Harley said.

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More Local News

Organ donors sought

State Health Commissioner Dr. Richard Daines and city Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Frieden are urging New Yorkers to use the state's new organ and tissue donor registry to pledge their own gifts of life.

At www.nyhealth.gov/donatelife, any New Yorker who wants to sign up with the New York State Donate Life Registry may do so.

Check out MTA cuts

City Controller William Thompson has updated his online system of maps and charts to help New Yorkers determine how the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's service cuts would affect them in just a few months.

"The MTA has approved Draconian transit service cuts that will take effect as early as June 28," Thompson said.

"Transit riders should know exactly what they will face if Albany lawmakers do not step in. In the interim, riders can prepare for the planned cuts by searching my online system to determine the impact on their commutes."

Thompson's system — at www.comptroller.nyc.gov — allows users to input a ZIP code to see a table and map of what the proposed MTA cuts would mean to their neighborhoods. Users also can search by subway line or bus route to see a table of the more than 300 cuts.

Computer help on tap

Bronx Community College's program for displaced home-makers is offering a free beginner/intermediate level computer class in Microsoft Office, with job readiness workshops and job placement assistance to all eligible persons.

Classes run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday, April 27 to May 28. Registration will be at 10 a.m. on Thursday. Call (718) 289-5828 for information and an appointment.

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