

Editorial...

We Support Marshalls; Town Should Approve Project Quickly



The South Port Marquee displays many of the tenant names at the Shirley center



This photo shows the proposed site location for the Marshalls store.



An artist rendering of the new store at its South Port Center location.

For the last six months, representatives of Lerner-Heidenberg Properties have been working with town officials and community leaders to finalize the plans for a new 26,000 square foot Marshall's store located in the Southport shopping center in Shirley.

The Marshalls store would be located in the northeast corner of the shopping center between Payless Shoes and Waldbaum's.

Marshalls is a store that will sell discount clothing and home items that will be used by the residents of our community. It will bring new jobs and tax dollars to our community.

The Marshalls proposal, including a request for a parking variance, is currently before the Town of Brookhaven. The town should approve these requests quickly.

The Southport shopping center has been the example for local developers to follow. The shopping center is clean and well maintained. It has security, and management has gone out of its way to be a good neighbor.

The owners of the company, Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg, have worked hard over the years to build a strong working relationship with our community. They are active members of the Chamber of Commerce of the Mastics and Shirley and the Montauk Highway Merchants' Association.

Lerner-Heidenberg Properties are huge financial supporters and contributors to our community. Each year they close the shopping center to help kick off the community Christmas parade. Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg provided all of the funding to restore the historic Petty House. Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg have also taken part in the annual holiday toy and food drive and most recently served as a sponsor for "Operation Help our Troops."

Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg have committed hundreds of thousands of dollars to help with the construction of the Sunrise Highway Service Road and exit ramp in Shirley, if the State ever moves forward with this project.

Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg have also pledged to take part in the revitalization and

renovation of Montauk Highway and McGraw Street.

Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg aren't required to do these things; they choose to do them. In an interview with the South Shore Press some years ago Stephen Lerner said it best; "People said I was crazy to open this type of shopping center in Mastic-Shirley and that it would never work. Over 20 years later, the Southport Shopping Center is one of the most successful shopping centers in Suffolk County. That is because of the support we have received from the residents of Mastic, Shirley and Mastic Beach. Our company loves this community and we look forward to our relationship growing."

Developers usually come to the community, promise everything, build a mess and then go. Stephen Lerner and Robert Heidenberg have invested in our community. Lerner-Heidenberg Properties is one of the largest taxpayers in our community and its shopping center is one of the largest employers. Lerner-Heidenberg Properties has been a good neighbor and it is our hope that the Town of Brookhaven will approve the final stage of the Southport Shopping Center quickly.

Community Viewpoint...

Dear Editor,

According to Marine Captain Scott A. Huesing, a company commander serving in Ramadi, Iraq, [ARMY TIMES 5 March 2007] instead of the "president's orders for 20,000 more troops in Iraq," we should send instead hand-selected Special Forces from Wal-Mart and Home Depot and other giants of industry. Elite in nature, but untouched by the hand of combat, these troops possess the skills needed to make a difference in the war waged in Iraq.

After four hard years of fighting an insurgency and toppling the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, the U.S. war machine has perfected the art of breaking stuff and leaving behind a wake of destruction. Although well trained in the art of war, the military is not good in cleaning up.

The solution begins by taking all of those in corporate America who want to advance the signs of democracy – and increase their profit margins. What better symbol of democracy and freedom do we have than a Wal-Mart standing on every corner!

Can you imagine if they deploy en masse: Tractor-trailer trucks filled with

construction materials, signage, shopping carts, cash registers and millions of white plastic bags with yellow smiley-faces that say "Always." The new troop uniforms are distinctive from those of the military serving in country – bright orange vests adorned with medals for associate of the month and blue smocks with happy face pins touting an information operations campaign message of "How can I help you?"

As these industrial shock troops hit the ground, they infiltrate every major city in Iraq, planting their flags on key terrain: Mosul, Baghdad, Ramadi, Basra, Fallujah, and Hadithah. They begin to build massive, hardened positions of commerce. They stage logistic facilities in remote areas to keep their industrial fortresses stocked.

As they do, a strange thing begins to happen. As if by the hand of Allah, local citizens seek out jobs that are now in abundance. As that new force takes seed, others begin to see the value of having an occupying force such as this in their homeland. The locals soon find they can get lumber to rebuild their homes, plumbing supplies for running water and waste removal, electrical

wiring to provide power for lights and glass to replace the cardboard boxes covering windows that were blown out even years ago. They beam at the prospect of taking part in the reconstruction of their country with their own hands.

The Iraqi family makes a pilgrimage, not to Mecca, but to the local Wal-Mart Supercenter. The mother finds she can get groceries and a new set of skillet and pots. The grandfather can get his eyes checked and a new pair of glasses. The father goes next door to Home Depot, where he is amazed to see a sign on a fleet of tractors and equipment that reads "Rent Me" in Arabic and decides his weekend project will be to clean up the rubble and garbage that has surrounded his modest home for the last decade and do some landscaping.

And before they make a trek back to their village, they all grab a bite at the halal [defined as permissible Arabic food to be consumed] McDonald's Express conveniently located at the exit of the western wonderland. Within months, the shootings and random explosions that have been part of daily life become less and less prevalent as

these corporate strong points stand tall and the people of Iraq slowly begin to patch up every bullet-ridden car, home and structure.

The insurgents soon find out that their reign of terror, intimidation and murder is no match for what this new presence is offering the populace. The terrorists are quickly out of business; their stockholders have gotten out before it crashed, and a corporate takeover has occurred in Iraq. Jobs, supplies and quality of life that Iraqis have never known are alive and strong – not an American life, but a taste of what can happen when people have the opportunity to decide for themselves and make a difference. The bitter feelings they once had fade to a fond remembrance of warriors who gave everything they had, and more, to ensure a peaceful Iraq. If only.

Thanks to Captain Huesing of the Marines

Sincerely,
Anthony Lembo