

THE PLAIN DEALER

How Steelyard came to be

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May 2004: First Interstate Properties Ltd. agrees to buy more than 100 acres from International Steel Group Inc. Plans call for \$100 million, 1 million-square-foot, big-box retail complex - a first for city.

September 2004: First Interstate President Mitchell Schneider says he expects to open Steelyard Commons by 2006.

Neighborhood development groups fear big-box retail could pinch local merchants. Schneider says project will create 1,800 full-time jobs.

October 2004: Cleveland Planning Commission approves site and design concepts.

December 2004: Steelyard Commons identified as spot for Wal-Mart's first store inside city limits.

January 2005: City gives final approval to development plan. Councilman Joe Cimperman introduces ordinance that would restrict amount of groceries a big-box retailer could sell.

February 2005: Schneider, working with Mayor Jane Campbell, proposes deal: Cimperman's ordinance dies, Wal-Mart agrees that Steelyard store won't be a supercenter (extra groceries) until 2013. Council President Frank Jackson shelves Cimperman's ordinance, talks of new bill using Schneider's plan. But Wal-Mart says it's dropping Cleveland plans.

March 2005: Schneider releases survey of 400 city residents, says 78 percent want Wal-Mart in city.

May 2005: Schneider's application for building permit reveals weeks of hidden negotiations that bring Wal-Mart back to Steelyard. Because council had never voted on new law after the retailer pulled out, permit rolls through.

September 2005: Construction begins.

January 2006: Council approves tax increment financing agreement. Seventy percent of new taxes from Steelyard will pay for completion of Canal Towpath Trail into downtown and buy land for Canal Basin Park near Detroit-Superior Bridge. Rest of tax money will help small businesses affected by Steelyard.

March 2006: Mittal Steel and the Ohio & Erie Canal Association announce steel-heritage exhibit at the shopping center.

November 2006: Schneider releases study he paid for that says Steelyard may not hurt local retail districts as much as feared.

February 2007: Home Depot becomes first store to open at Steelyard.

Source: Plain Dealer archives