

Council approves anti-Mall posture

By DAVID BROWN

Citing the importance of downtown commercial development in Albany, Schenectady and Troy, the Albany Council of Neighborhood Associations Sunday approved a formal statement of its opposition to the Crossgates Shopping Mall proposal.

The council had gone on record in 1978 opposing the shopping mall planned in Guilderland's Pine Bush, but agreed to make a formal statement for the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

The state department is to study an environmental impact study prepared by mall developers and is to rule whether state permits are to be approved for construction to proceed.

The mall has been a center of controversy because it is planned for the heart of the Pine Bush, the natural habitat of the endangered Karner blue butterfly.

In asking that all permit applications be denied and that the state Department of Transportation refuse to spend any money on making the mall possible, the council representing 18 neighborhood associations listed three basic reasons.

Reasons stated included:

- "Suburban commercial development on the scale of the Pyramid Crossgates Mall would largely eliminate the viability of commercial revitalization in downtown Albany, Schenectady and Troy. With good signs of rebirth in all three downtowns, we do not want these downtown business districts further threatened.

- "We oppose the Crossgates proposal because it would drive out the small merchants . . . Just as we support owner occupancy of homes in the city, we support the smaller and locally owned retail establishments of this region;" and,

- "This environment includes unique pine barrens, endangered species, wetlands, dune landforms and an aquifer, and should be preserved."

The approval was given at a regular council meeting attended by representatives of nine neighborhood associations.

Also discussed at the meeting was a proposal that the council support an open container law for Albany.

Harold Rubin, council chairman, said several neighborhood associations have had problems with teen-agers drinking alcoholic beverages in public and disturbing neighborhood residents.

"We are trying to find out what the problem is, and a solution," Rubin said.

"We want something that protects the rights of individuals and at the same time protects the community; there are no simple right or wrong answers."

Council members are going to study ordinances in other cities and determine if they might be applicable for Albany, he said.

The council also discussed an Albany State University off-campus student association proposal to eliminate the "anti-grouper law," and modify city code of occupancy requirements.

The "anti-grouper law" prohibits more than three unrelated adults from

living in the same house and is opposed by students who say it is not working.

The student proposal would allow occupancy based on bedroom space computed on a one person per 80-square-foot basis, and would require city inspections for occupancy certificates every three years.

Council members had objections to the three-year inspection plan, and questions about the rest of the proposal.