



The

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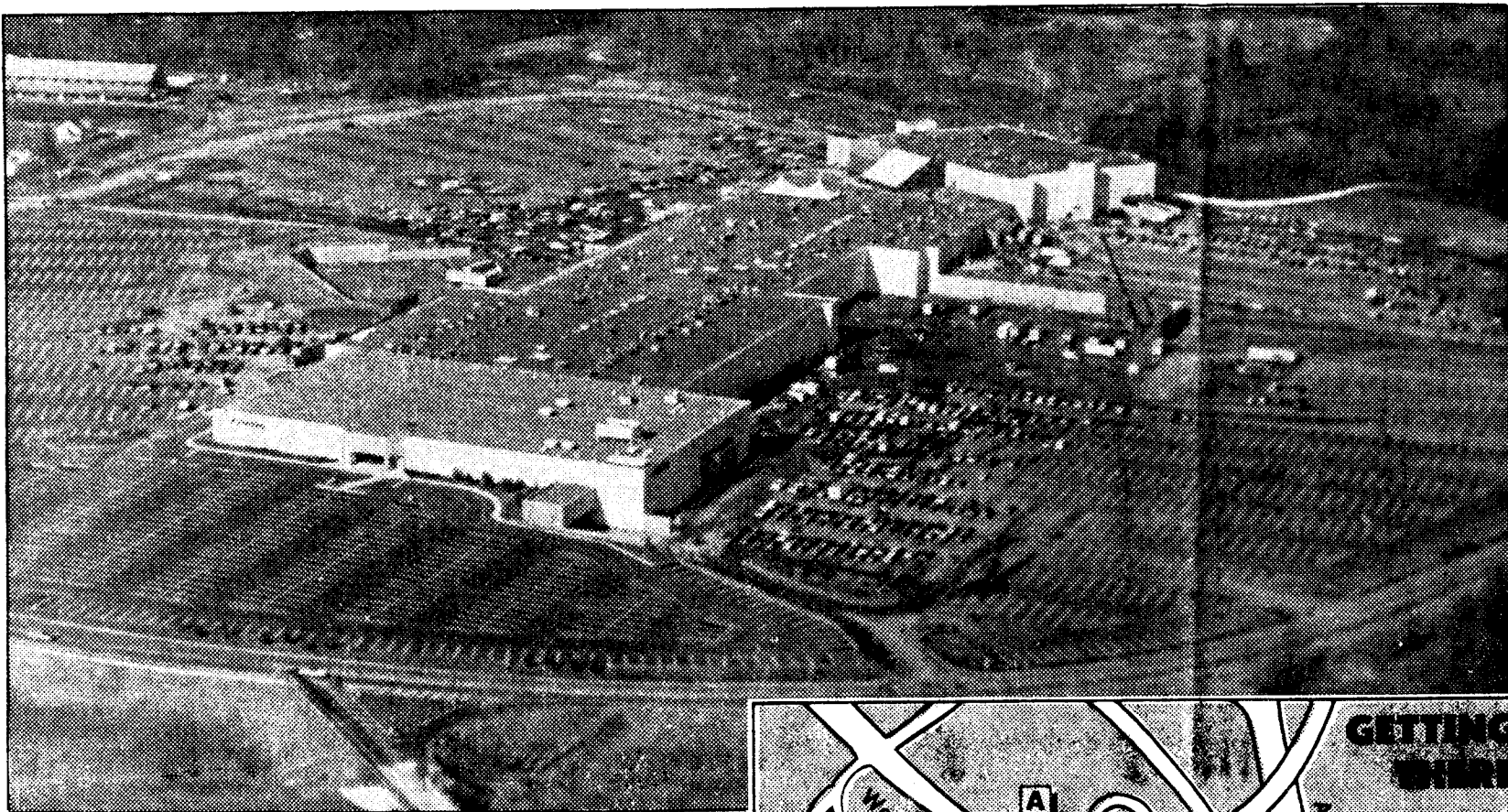
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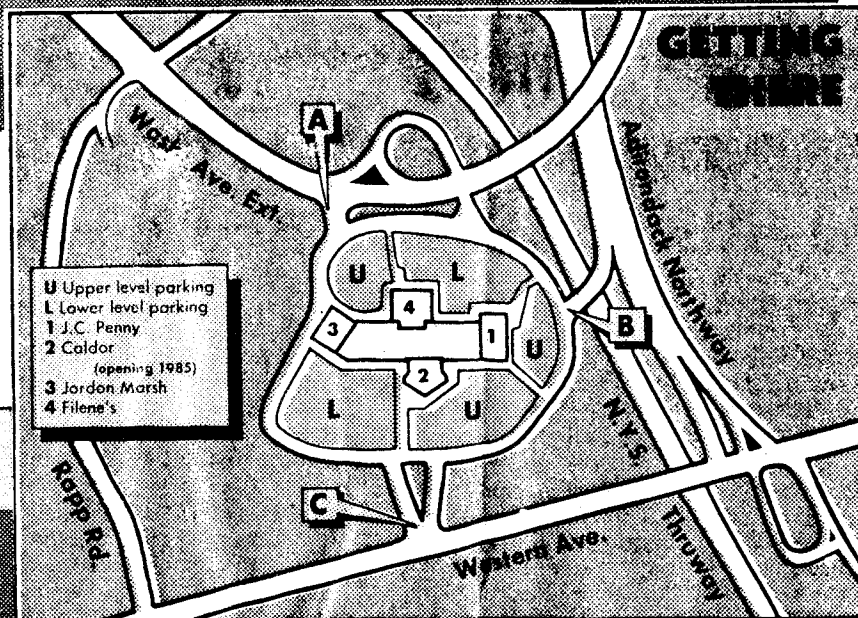
Crossgates: 'D-day' nears



K-N photos/Skip Dickstein and Roberta Smith

READY — Crossgates Mall in Guiderland, in aerial view above, is scheduled to open Sunday. A portion of mall interior is shown below, while map at right gives location of parking areas and the mall's four "anchor" stores. Mall is accessible from A, Washington Avenue Extension; B, the Northway; or, C, Western Avenue.

K-N map/Kevin McReavy



Workers scurry to get shopping complex ready

Complex Ready

By LISE BANG-JENSEN

Knickerbocker News Reporter

GUILDERLAND — Crossgates Mall, the giant shopping complex nearly stopped by a tiny butterfly, emerges from its cocoon Sunday.

To meet the official opening date, "4,000 people are working 24 hours, around the clock," said Robert Ungerer, a managing partner of Pyramid Crossgates Co., developer of the 955,000 square-foot mall. (The Colonie Center in Colonie is 823,000 square feet.)

"Things are going real good. Seventy to 100

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stores will be open on Sunday, with more stores opening daily," Ungerer said.

Conspicuously absent from Sunday's 11:30 a.m. opening day ceremonies will be Guilderland town Supervisor Kevin Moss, a longtime opponent of the mall, and his wife, Barbara.

Nevertheless, another Barbara Moss will be there. That's the name of one of the mall's tenants, a New Jersey-based women's clothing store that has no connection to the supervisor's wife.



One of the nation's fanciest J.C. Penney stores and another Caldor, a discount department store that already has four stores in the area, will open Sunday.

The mall's two other anchor stores, Filene's and Jordan Marsh, archrivals in their hometown of Boston, are expected to open during the summer of 1985.

Aside from confirming the opening of J.C. Penney, Caldor and a 10-screen movie theater, mall officials have refused to name which of 170 smaller shops will open next week.

However, Thom McAn, Record Town, Hickory Farms, CVS Pharmacy and other chain stores that

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Workers scurry to meet Crossgates opening date

CONTINUED seem to pop up in every shopping mall will be there, according to an unofficial tenant list.

Brooks Brothers, the New York City-based haberdasher for pinstripers, also appears on the list, but sources say the firm has yet to sign a lease.

Among those expected to make their Capital District debut at Crossgates in the future are Brookstone's, a Boston-based hardware store that caters to upper-income weekend carpenters; Hydrotube, which features a two-story waterslide; and the Custom Shop, which makes custom-made shirts for men and women starting at \$26.50.

"This will be our 59th store," said Betty Vaughn, a spokeswoman for the New York City-based Custom Shop. "We felt Albany was a growth area, and this mall in particular. We research our locations carefully. We felt there was a market in Albany."



OTHER RETAILERS apparently agree.

More than 2 million square feet of new retail space, including Crossgates, opened in the Capital District in 1983 or is to open this year.

An upturn in the national economy and a downturn in the area unemployment rate — which dropped to 7.3% in January, almost a percentage point lower than one year earlier — make retailers happy.

Retailers also hope to reverse what they believe is a kind of local trade deficit. One retail survey (disputed by Crossgates opponents) estimated Capital District residents spent upwards of \$130 million annually on clothing and accessories purchased outside the region.

Hoping to lure affluent shoppers with designer labels and high-quality goods, many area retailers are upgrading their merchandise.

About one-fourth of the households in the six-county region (Albany, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties) have after-tax incomes exceeding \$35,000 a year.

When Crossgates was first proposed publicly in June 1978, plans called for an \$85 million mall with six anchor stores. Last summer, the Guilderland Industrial

Development Agency granted the developer a \$53.9 million low-interest loan to finance the project.

Other than saying they were relying on conventional financing to pay for the remainder of the mall, officials of the development firm in recent months have refused to put a total price tag on the project.



IN THEIR RACE WITH the clock, some anxious Crossgates workers preparing for Sunday's opening have been struck by an epidemic of butterfly jitters. One nervous worker, searching for fixtures for a mall store, telephoned California at 5:30 a.m., forgetting the three-hour time difference.

While many shoppers are anxiously awaiting Crossgates' debut, not everyone shares that feeling.

The onslaught of stomach butterflies might strike opponents of the shopping complex as poetic justice. An endangered butterfly — the Karner blue — nearly put a stop to the multimillion-dollar complex.

"I will never shop at Crossgates. I will not support any chains that have stores located in Crossgates," vowed Don Rittner, an environmentalist who had fought unsuccessfully against locating the mall on the 163 acres of ecologically fragile Pine Bush. The sandy pine barrens have the world's largest surviving population of Karner blue butterflies.

Nor have the years softened Donald Reeb's opposition to Crossgates.

"I haven't seen anything that would mitigate the hardships we discussed for five years," said Reeb, former president of the McKownville Improvement Association, a homeowner group in the area in which Crossgates was built.

Critics claim that in addition to destroying part of the pine barrens, Crossgates poses traffic, air pollution, sewage and other environmental problems, and that the Capital District cannot support another large shopping mall.

Despite those arguments, Robert Flacke, then state commissioner of environmental conservation, granted necessary permits for the mall in September 1981, reversing his earlier position.

LOCAL/STATE

70 to 100 stores to open Sunday at Crossgates Mall

By LISE BANG-JENSEN

Knickerbocker News Reporter

GUILDERLAND — Officials of the Crossgates Mall have refused to disclose which stores will open Sunday when the shopping mall makes its debut.

In fact, they have declined even to discuss the names of any other tenants aside from the four anchor stores: J.C. Penney and Caldor, which will open Sunday, and Filene's and Jordan Marsh, expected to open next summer.

Between 70 and 100 of the mall's 170 smaller stores will open Sunday, according to Robert Ungerer, a managing partner of Pyramid Crossgates Co., the mall developer.

Despite the reticence about talking to the press, a map distributed to potential tenants and to truck drivers who are making deliveries there shows many familiar retail names.

However, a retail source, who asked not to be identified, cautioned against concluding the stores had all signed leases. He said the developer's maps often had displayed the names of potential tenants who had been approached but had not signed leases.

With that caveat, here is an unofficial list of stores and restaurants that may open Sunday or thereafter. It is based on the latest map the developer is distributing and conversations with a few of the tenants:

FIRST FLOOR: K-D Hallmark & Stationery; Kay Bee Toy and Hobby; Thom McAn Family Shoe; Record Town; Casual Corner; Ormonds; Open Country; Foxmoor; G&G Shop.

Bombay; Jaccard's; Brookstone (hardware); American Eagle; Cutlery World; Barbara Moss; Hickory Farm; Friendly's Ice Cream; Designs; CVS Health & Beauty Aid; B. Dalton Books.

Villa Roma; Cohen Optical; Granada TV; Sidewinder's; Burger King; Crossgates Dental Center; Fabri-Center; D&M Hair Salon; Oriental Gifts; General Nutrition Center; Footlocker.

Claire's Boutique; Sizes Unlimited; Merry Go Round; Heaven; the Ti Shop; Young Shoe; Fanny Farmer; Famous Chocolate Chip; Wilson's Leather and Suede.

Baker Shoe; Cummings; Oak Tree; Chess King; Stride Rite; Sterling Optical; Northeast Research; Northeast Savings Bank; Mario's Barber.

SECOND FLOOR: National Nutrition Center; Photo Express; Albany Savings Bank; Diamond Boutique; Big Sky; Children's Bookmark; Athletes Foot; Yield House (furniture).

The Gap; Wild Pair; Ups & Downs; Telephone Store; Butler Shoes; Chez Chocolate; Bridges; Guild Jewelry; Limited; J. Riggins; Champs; Sacket's Hallmark; Deb Shop.

A.S. Beck; Weathervane; Deck the Walls; Park Place; Bed and Bath; Au Bon Pain; Liberty Travel; American Steak House; Tape Word; Things Remembered; Franks's Two Gino; T-Shirt Plus.

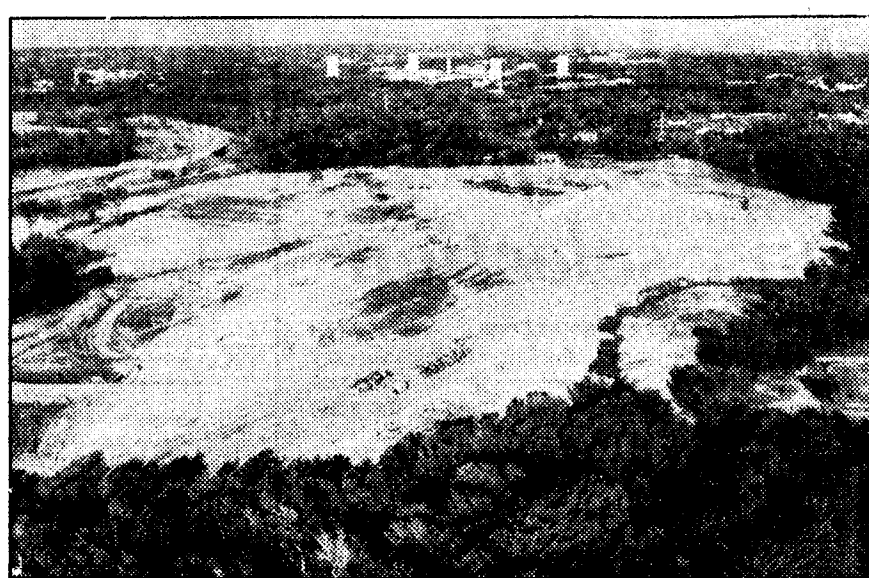
Radio Shack; K&K Toy; Love Shop; Irish Cottage; Spencer's gift shop; Beau Monde; Hanover Shoe; This End Up; Wicks & Sticks; The Custom Shop; Shirtmakers.

Baubles, Bangles & Beads; Brooks Brothers; Lechters; Caren Charles; Lane Bryant; Kinney Shoe.

A Garden Court surrounded by take-out restaurants, including Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream; Hot Dog Charlie's; One Potato Two; Amato Pizza; Chen Chinese; Long John Silver; Philadelphia Steak; Hot Sam's; and California Smoothie.



BEFORE AND DURING — When Crossgates Mall was still on the drawing board, public hearings on the controversial project drew large crowds of town residents, like the one that packed Town Hall one evening in



Knickerbocker News file photos

January 1980, above left. Once the mall won final approvals, construction proceeded quickly. Photo at right shows excavated mall site last August, with State University at Albany in background.

How the mall grew — a chronology

By **DEBBY BOUYEA**

Knickerbocker News Reporter

GUILDERLAND — The region's largest shopping mall existed only on paper for more than five years, but it took developers only nine months to turn the blueprints into concrete.

Although much sweat and manpower went into constructing the Crossgates Mall, the more arduous labor belonged to those who had to persuade Guilderland the large mall should be built there.

It started in June 1978, when officials of the Pyramid Crossgates Corp. — the mall developer — announced they planned to build an \$85 million shopping mall on 135 acres in the Pine Bush area of eastern Guilderland.

On Aug. 8, 1978, in a move that drew much criticism, the Guilderland Town Board voted to rezone 116 acres to allow for an automotive repair center to be built in the mall. Ironically, no such center has been built.

The property where the mall was to be built had been zoned Conference Office Research since 1971.

included the 60 acres to be donated by Pyramid.

Opponents of the mall were numerous. According to a March 1980 study conducted by State University at Albany, 61% of Guilderland residents opposed it.

A lawsuit which challenged the 1978 rezoning of the Crossgates land was filed by the opponents in state Supreme Court in June 1980 and was thrown out by Justice Aaron Klein on Nov. 25.

After 80 sessions and 84 witnesses, the environmental hearings ended on July 24, 1980. Four months later, the hearing officer recommended EnCon Commissioner Robert Flacke approve construction of the mall.

Sixteen-year incumbent Town Supervisor Carl J. Walters, who never took a stand on the mall, decided to retire in 1981.

Kevin Moss, a Republican town justice who succeeded Walters as supervisor, strongly opposed the mall.

The first hint of what type of stores would be in the mall was given when Hess department store chain President Irwin Greeburg said he would open a store there, if the mall were built. Ironically, there will be no Hess store in the mall.

More lawsuits by opponents were filed and thrown out by state Supreme Court and the Appellate Division.

In October 1982, Moss disclosed Pyramid was seeking \$48.5 million in financing from the Albany County Industrial Development Agency (IDA). The application was referred to the town IDA.

Nothing more was heard about IDA financing until April 21, 1983, when the mall developer appeared at a routine town IDA meeting seeking and received hasty approval of \$53.9 million in tax-exempt bonds.

The bonds allowed the developer to be exempt from sales tax on construction materials and mortgage taxes.

Such zoning also allowed for a shopping mall to be built. The 1978 rezoning changed the zoning of most of the land to business use.

During the rezoning process, the developers promised to donate 60 acres in the environmentally sensitive area to Albany and Guilderland for preservation.

Opposition to the mall cropped up immediately and intensified in June 1979 when Pyramid submitted a draft environmental impact statement to the state Department of Environmental Conservation (EnCon).

The statement contended the mall would generate \$2.7 million in taxes annually, employ nearly 3,000 construction workers and provide 2,500 permanent jobs once the mall was completed. It also said 11,400 more cars a day would be traveling on Western Avenue once the mall was opened.

Opponents contended the mall would be detrimental to the endangered Karner blue butterfly and cause noise and air pollution.

The most vocal mall opponents, members of the McKownville Improvement Association, met Aug. 10, 1979, to plan their fight against the mall. Two days later another group, Concerned Citizens Against Crossgates, conducted its first meeting.

On Aug. 13, 1979, EnCon conducted the first in a long series of hearings to determine whether to allow the mall to be constructed.

The hearings were recessed the next day to allow developers to modify their road plan.

Two months later, the developer submitted a revised environmental impact statement to EnCon that included a new road plan with a Western Avenue bridge over the Thruway.

EnCon officials rejected the statement as incomplete. Another statement was submitted on Nov. 21, 1979, which said the traffic noise would not affect area homes and businesses.

Meanwhile, the turmoil caused by the mall proposal affected town politics.

History was made when Virginia Horan, running on an anti-Crossgates platform, became the first Democrat in more than a century to win a seat on the Town Board in November 1979.

Town Republican Committee members were non-committal about the mall during the 1979 campaign, but after the election they issued a statement opposing it.

In January 1980, Mrs. Horan attempted to keep her campaign promises and sponsored two resolutions, one to repeal the rezoning of the Crossgates property and one to impose an eight-month building moratorium until the town's master plan was reviewed. However, repealing the rezoning still would not have prevented the mall from being built.

Mrs. Horan's attempt failed.

The opponents sought to delay environmental permit hearings in state Supreme Court on Feb. 16, 1980. Their attempt was unsuccessful, as was an appeal to the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court.

In April 1981, mall opponents petitioned to have environmental hearings reopened, but Flacke rejected the requests.

On June 25, 1981, Flacke denied Pyramid's application to build the mall, saying the Western Avenue-Northway intersection would fail to meet carbon monoxide standards.

On July 14, 1981, the developer reapplied for environmental permits and modified entrances to divert traffic from the Western Avenue-Northway area.

A week before, Guilderland residents had packed Town Hall as the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) met to consider a request by Pyramid for a special-use permit and three variances to allow for construction of the mall.

A second ZBA hearing, conducted July 29, drew 275 people and had to be held in two sessions so everyone could testify.

At an August 1981 Town Board meeting, Mrs. Horan again tried unsuccessfully to repeal the 1978 rezoning of the Crossgates property.

Another lawsuit was filed by mall opponents in August 1981, this time to challenge the right of EnCon to issue mall permits.

Mall opponents received a double blow on Sept. 18, 1981, when Flacke reversed his previous ruling and approved environmental permits for construction and state Supreme Court threw out the latest suit.

Pyramid had its days in court also. On Oct. 28, the developer obtained a court order halting a Guilderland ZBA hearing after the board received a traffic report critical of the mall.

The suit initiated by Crossgates was dropped and the board resumed hearings in November 1981.

Also in November, a second Democrat, James Cleary, was elected to serve on the Town Board. He also ran on an anti-Crossgates platform.

The zoning board conducted the last of its Crossgates hearings Dec. 2, 1981. A decision was expected Dec. 16.

The day before that decision, the mall developers returned to state Supreme Court to obtain a restraining order preventing the ZBA from acting on the mall. The request was denied.

The zoning board granted a special-use permit allowing construction of the mall to begin.

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THE STRUGGLE was still not over as Crossgates faced more hurdles before putting the first shovel into the ground.

Less than two weeks after taking office, on Jan. 13, 1982, Moss introduced a plan to rezone the mall site to

Nov. 8, 1982, state Transportation Commissioner William C. Hennessy approved the final road design for the Crossgates Mall. While he did not actually grant the necessary permits for roadway construction, he cleared the way for Flacke to remove a stay on 11 environmental permits and for the town to grant a building permit.

On Nov. 30, 1982, the town issued the first building permit for the mall after the developer agreed to go back to the original design for the Washington Avenue Extension entrance.

The permit covered the first 150,000-square-foot section of the mall that features a J.C. Penney Co. store.

Earth was finally moved for the first time the second week in January 1983, when workers bored 100 feet for soil samples in preparation for constructing the bridge over Western Avenue.

By February 1983, trees were being cleared from the mall site and the last lawsuits were being cleared from the courts.

On March 10, 1983, the developer announced Filene's, a Boston-based department store, would open at the mall.

Pyramid Crossgates Co. said it would open the first 775,000-square-foot phase of the 955,000-square-foot mall in October 1983.

In May 1983, the developer pushed the opening date back to Feb. 15, 1984, saying it wanted to allow more time for smaller tenants to move in.

On May 24, 1983, the town issued the second building permit after Moss obtained written assurance from the developer a public clarification would be made concerning the new opening date and it provided the supervisor with a schedule of road improvements.

By June 1983, work permits for all the road improvements were issued by the state DOT. They included a bridge over Western Avenue connecting to the Northway, a ramp off the Northway onto the mall site and another bridge on Washington Avenue Extension connecting to the mall.

On June 16, the foundation for the first section of the mall was poured.

Developers announced in September 1983 the opening date had once again been pushed back, this time to March 7, 1984.

By December 1983, the first portion of the road improvements — the bridge going over Western Avenue — had been opened to traffic and buildings could be seen rising from the Pine Bush.

On Jan. 27, 1984, J.C. Penney received a certificate of occupancy from Guilderland, giving it permission to open its doors to shoppers. So far this is the only store to receive a certificate of occupancy, but the town Building Department said it expected to issue the two remaining certificates — one for Caldor and one for the mall section — today.

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The hearings resumed Feb. 19.

Meanwhile Pyramid Crossgates Co. claimed to have firm commitments from several department stores to locate in the mall, but refused to name them.

In May 1980, the city of Albany received a \$382,000 federal grant to buy 109 acres of Pine Bush land that

The day before that decision, the mall developers returned to state Supreme Court to obtain a restraining order preventing the ZBA from acting on the mall. The request was denied.

The zoning board granted a special-use permit allowing construction of the mall to begin.



THE STRUGGLE was still not over as Crossgates faced more hurdles before putting the first shovel into the ground.

Less than two weeks after taking office, on Jan. 13, 1982, Moss introduced a plan to rezone the mall site to a light industrial zone in a last-ditch effort to block the project.

On Jan. 27, the Town Board voted not to conduct public hearings on Moss' proposal, killing the plan. One of those voting against the attempt to block the mall was Mrs. Horan, who may have lost her 1983 re-election bid because of her vote.

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Once again the opening date for the mall was changed. Developers announced last week the first phase of the mall would open Sunday — three days ahead of schedule.

Today, construction workers and storekeepers continue to work around the clock preparing for what some shoppers have been awaiting and opponents have been dreading for the last six years.