

# Crossgates expansion hinges on traffic plans

By Ben Jacklet

GUILDERLAND — Crossgates Mall could nearly double in size within the next year if the mall's developers have their way.

In 1981, when the zoning board of appeals originally granted Pyramid Crossgates Co. a special use permit to build the mall, the size allotted was 750,000

square feet. Last week, Pyramid applied for an amendment of the original permit, in order to expand the mall to 1.3 million square feet.

Pyramid representatives have sketched out a site layout plan detailing probable additions to the mall and submitted it to town officials. Expansion plans include two new department

stores, more than 60 small enterprises and a large parking lot.

According to Town Zoning Coordinator Don Cropsey, Pyramid's original application was incomplete. "There's no information on the plan," he said, "no sizes, no contours, no indication of how many parking

(Continued on Page 5)

# Crossgates expansion, traffic plans. . .

(Continued from Page 1)

spaces there will be...They (Pyramid) will have to submit a more detailed plan, and they have promised that they will."

No information is available on what specific stores may be added to the mall.

## Traffic a priority

Any amendment to the current permit will be granted on the condition that Pyramid funds several traffic improvement projects, town officials assert.

Town Supervisor Kevin A. Moss, who met with Pyramid

representatives last Friday, said the developers have agreed to pay for a realignment of Rapp Road as well as a new bridge connecting the Crossgates ring road with the Northway.

A realigned Rapp Road leading directly into the mall's ring road would be a useful option for morning commuters, Moss pointed out, because the ring road has limited traffic in the morning. "It would create a kind of Northern Bypass," he said.

A bridge connecting the mall road to the Northway could reduce traffic on the section of Western Avenue between

Crossgates and the Northway by 32 percent. It has been estimated that 32 of every 100 cars exiting Crossgates simply drive down Western a short distance and get on the Northway.

Moss said the new bridge and the realignment of Rapp Road, in addition to the widening of Western Avenue (funded by Pyramid); the rebuilt Thruway bridge (funded by DOT); and the proposed Southern Bypass Corridor (possibly funded by the town and the county), will give the town "a comprehensive road improvement plan unparalleled in the Capital District."

The need for improvement is obvious, and it reaches beyond the inconvenience of a traffic jam. According to a recent article in *The Times Union*, the section of Western Avenue reaching from Crossgates to Stuyvesant Plaza is "the most accident-prone stretch of state highway anywhere in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties." The 1.1 mile strip of road was the scene of 309 accidents last year.

The original permit had 23 special conditions attached to it, including a clause that no amendment would be approved without road-improvement plans. DOT has not completed its traffic study yet, and the matter will not go before the zoning board until the legal and engineering feasibility of the road construction is determined.

The original permit was granted to Pyramid amidst controversy and dissension; it took 15 public hearings to resolve the matter.

The Rapp Road project and the bridge construction will be funded exclusively by Pyramid, Moss said, at a price estimated between \$3 and \$5 million.