

DAILY NEWS

Shopping center is on the way for S. Bronx

BY DANIEL BEEKMAN

THE crossroads of Hunts Point and Longwood are on the road to renewal.

Local leaders say a 90,000-square-foot shopping center planned for the busy intersection of Hunts Point Ave., Southern Blvd. and Bruckner Blvd. will anchor a struggling business corridor and lend the South Bronx transit hub a fresh new look.

Part of the site slated for development — just south of the Hunts Point No. 6 subway station and several bus stops — has been a vacant eyesore for more than 20 years, said Community Board 2 district manager John Robert.

"It has been a fallow lot," he said of the property, obscured by a slipshod fence and graffiti. "This development will help change the way people see Hunts Point. We're very happy."

The \$35 million shopping center, designed for "mid-box" chains such as Old Navy and Marshalls, will supplant a gas station, a rental center and a mattress store, and could include



Rendering of The Crossroads, a shopping center and housing complex in works at intersection of Hunts Point Ave. and Bruckner and Southern Blvds.

\$60 million of housing. Last month, Board 2 approved a rezoning of the site, backed by the Southern Blvd. Business Improvement District.

"I think the shopping center will boost the neighborhood," said BID Executive Director Medina Sadiq. "We need a new, more polished look to compete."

The new Gateway Center mall near Yankee Stadium and a re-

vamped Hub on Third Ave. have challenged Southern Blvd.'s mom and pop shops, she said.

According to a recent BID survey, the corridor needs more banks, supermarkets, electronics stores and bookstores.

But some local shopkeepers are afraid of change.

Gary Pinero, manager at Golden Dream Jewelry on Southern Blvd., is no fan of chain stores.

"A mall there would take business away," said Pinero, who conceded the development could put scores of jobless locals to work.

The shopping center — dubbed "The Crossings" — will boast two floors of retail, but developers Prusik Group and LargaVista Companies also hope to stack 130 affordable apartments on top.

Board 2 would be thrilled to see the apartments added, but the housing component will depend on scarce public funds, said Prusik principal Andrew Katz.

He expects The Crossings to generate roughly 200 construction jobs and 250 permanent jobs, and has targeted a grand opening in late 2012.

Prusik is a partner of Taconic, the investment firm that redeveloped the mammoth Bank Note Building in Hunts Point, just off the Bruckner Expressway, and is bullish on the neighborhood.

"The Hunts Point subway stop draws 3 million riders per year," said Katz. "This community is moving in a great direction."