

Met Food and N.Y.U. try to meet on lease renewal

By Clark Merrefield

For more than a decade, East and West Villagers have seen New York University snatch up land and existing buildings for new dorms and facilities. But, when the school tried to jack up a beloved supermarket's rent in a building it owns on Second Ave., residents rebelled.

Now, it looks like Met Food, known for reasonable prices and family ownership, will stay put in the space where it's been for 30 years. The store's lease is up May 1, and on April 18, N.Y.U. representatives Alicia Hurley and Gary Parker met with Met Food's owners and Councilmember Rosie Mendez to discuss a deal.

"We think we're making progress," said Lisa Kaplan, chief of staff for Mendez, at a Community Board 3 meeting last week. "We think we're going to have something good to report — it's been constructive."

Michael Schumacher, who co-owns the store with his brother, declined to comment, saying he had promised N.Y.U. "in good faith" not to seek media coverage. But Bob Joyce, a member of the Seventh St. Block Association who spoke with Schumacher after the April 18 meeting, said Schumacher told him N.Y.U. is "talking about the possibility of a long-term lease at a rate that might be acceptable."

An affordable lease rate for Met Food has ramifications beyond the Schumachers' ownership interests. Many East Village senior citizens rely on the supermarket because it is more convenient and cheaper than the gourmet delis that dot Second Ave., not to mention the Whole Foods Market on E. Houston St.

"If Met Food is pushed out of here, I'm going to have to get on two buses to go to the stores on 14th St.," said Gertrude Freeman, 84, who lives at the Evelyn and Louis Green Residence, a senior home on E. Fifth St. "And as you can see," she added, "I'm in a walker."

Residents' displeasure was evident during a raucous public meeting late last month, when a roomful of 60 East Villagers aimed barbed comments at Hurley and Parker over the school's reported offer of a two- or three-year lease at triple the rent. Though neither side will disclose the current rent, Rel Lavizzo, a broker for Tungsten Property, said the going monthly rate in the area is \$100 per square foot. Met Food occupies 3,700 square feet.

The lease's length will also be critical to the store's viability. Supermarkets typically operate on only a 1.5 percent to 2 percent profit margin, and without a long-term lease, usually 10 to 12 years, they have no incentive to make necessary repairs.

N.Y.U. contended Met Food is getting what it asked for. The current lease allows a rent increase to 90 percent of market value at its termination.

What the Schumachers weren't banking on when they signed the current lease was the explosion of luxury condominiums, hotels and bars in a neighborhood that looks much different now than when they bought the Met Food 21 years ago.

Freeman recalled the independent butcher shops and fruit markets that lined First Ave. four decades ago. Stiff competition kept prices low. Small row houses and an active street life gave the area a sense of community cohesion, "so people got to know each other," she said.

"N.Y.U., for once in your life — you've taken, taken, taken," said Sarah Dupuy, who resides in Freeman's building and has lived in the East Village for 40 years. "Why don't you do an open mitzvah? Keep this market here, and go away. Go on with your dorms and your education and all that, but don't do this. It's such bad karma, to say the least."

Reader Services



[Email our editor ARCHIVES](#)

Support the advertisers who support us.

JOFFREY BALLET SCHOOL
WWW.JOFFREYBALLETSCCHOOL.COM
SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR 2009 SUMMER CAMP INFORMATION

REGISTRATION CONTINUES FOR SPRING SEMESTER (AGES 2.5 TO 17)
JANUARY 5TH, 2009 TO JUNE 8TH, 2009

SUMMER CAMPS AND INTENSIVES 2009
FOR AGES 3 THRU 8
We have Summer Day Camps with a Variety of Workshops Including: Dance, Arts & Crafts, Music. Activities are centered around weekly themes such as Peter and the Wolf.

FOR AGES 10 THRU 13
We have Graded Ballet Intensives designed to rapidly improve the student's technique and Artistry.
ONLY 20 SPOTS PER PROGRAM.
See Web Site for details.
Programs Start June 15TH and run thru July 24TH.
Summer Registration Open Now.
REGISTER BEFORE CLASSES FILL.

434 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, 3RD FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10011
212-254-6520 JOFFREY@JOFFREYBALLETSCCHOOL.COM



www.dagginger.com

Feedback - Ads by Google

Whether or not Met Food gets to keep the space, N.Y.U. says it is committed to renting it to a supermarket.

“I don’t know what situation would lead to them not staying in that space right now. It’s not where our heads are,” Hurley said in a phone interview before the April 18 meeting. “But if something happened and for whatever reason we’re not able to negotiate this, it’s been very clear that a grocery store is desirable.”

That new grocery store, however, would be a long time coming. Under Met Food’s standing lease, N.Y.U. cannot rent the space for commercial purposes for five years after the lease ends, according to Joyce.

The Villager is published by Community Media LLC, 145 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10013
Phone: (212) 229-1890 | Fax: (212) 229-2790 | Advertising: 646-452-2465 | © 2008 Community Media, LLC

Written permission of the publisher must be obtained before any of the contents of this newspaper, in whole or in part, can be reproduced or redistributed.

