



# Walgreens expands to Williamsbridge Road

To set up shop in Morris Park

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*Last Updated: 12:10 AM, February 18, 2010*

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Walgreens is headed for one of the busiest corners in Morris Park. The drug store giant has inked a 20-year lease to expand a former Blockbuster Video and add more parking.

Negotiations for the new Walgreens at 1800 Williamsbridge Road lasted nearly two years, as brokers from NAI Friedland Realty, representing Walgreens, worked with Community Board 11 and the borough president's office to obtain permits necessary to alter the building.

Walgreens plans to expand the 7,543 square foot building by 3,600 square feet. It also plans to install approximately 20 new parking spots on a vacant lot next to the existing parking lot. Walgreens and a Citibank branch in the same building will share the new parking lot.

"The challenge for the Williamsbridge Road location was that there was a tremendous governmental process involved in order to expand the building," Friedland executive vice president Robin Herko said. "[But] 1800 Williamsbridge Road fit perfectly within the target area of our expansion plan for Walgreens. The location is ideal and has parking for the customers' shopping convenience."

According to Kathy Zamechansky, a Friedland vice-president who also worked on the sale, the community originally wanted a supermarket or gourmet deli at the location.

"My role was to work with the community board and elected officials to address any concerns that they had regarding the project," Zamechansky said. "Unfortunately, supermarkets cannot afford to pay really high rent because they operate on smaller profit margins. Drug stores can pay \$40 to \$50 per square foot. Supermarkets can only pay about \$20 per square foot."

Many in the community were afraid that the Walgreens, yet another chain drug store, would promise much and deliver little to Morris Park. But Zamechansky thinks that Morris Park will find Walgreens, eager to expand to the northeastern United States, a great partner.

"I think in the end, the community board, [Colliers who were] representing the landlord and Walgreens worked very well to address the needs of the community," Zamechansky added. "I think we worked to see that the community gets the jobs and that we are creating a good environment for the community and the store."

Walgreens expects to begin construction soon. The new parking lot will be built first, so that Citibank customers will still have somewhere to park when work begins on the building. According to developer Mark Steinberg, who has built more than 100 Walgreens drug stores around the nation, Walgreens hopes to open on Williamsbridge Road by late 2010.

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