

# Sweet Valley mall given the 'go-ahead'

By JOHN HOINSKI  
Staff Writer

The owner of a Dallas dry cleaning store has had part of his Sweet Valley property approved for rezoning for classification, allowing him to erect a small shopping center there. The permit apparently ends a squabble between the property owner and some Sweet Valley residents who opposed it.

Robert DeRemer, owner of DeRemer's Laundry and Gifts on 31 Tunkhannock Highway, has started leveling ground on three of his approximately 30 acres of land on Main Road in Sweet Valley. At the site, DeRemer would like to build a mini-mall consisting of five stores, including a pick-up station for his Dallas business, a drug store, a pizza parlor and probably two retail stores.

The move has irritated a number of Sweet Valley residents and initially prompted a petition against the idea. The matter has also caused Ross Township supervisors, one of whom signed the petition, to split on its vote for approval of the mall. Two supervisors voted "neutral", later clarifying that their vote meant they were not opposed to the construction. According to Supervisor Albert Holcomb, who voted against the building of the mall, the matter is probably "over and done with."

DeRemer recently received permission from the Luzerne County Planning Commission to go ahead with his plans after the site had been inspected by a member of that department and the Luzerne County Commissioners.

"When these people come to us for help, we have to make a yes or no decision," Commissioner Jim Phillips said. "I have been advocating for a long time that communities develop their own zoning program so we don't have to step in."

"But when they do approach us, we have to give them an answer one way or another. All three of us (Commissioners) have been out at that property at least once, and Adrian Merolli (executive director of the Planning Commission Staff) has been out there a number of



**Proposed mall**

This photo, taken from a contractors' brochure, depicts the type of mall Robert DeRemer has proposed for a section of Sweet Valley.

times and did the proper studies. He (DeRemer) will still need permission from DER for other phases of the project, but right now he has been given permission to go ahead with his plans. The people can appeal the decision, but this is what we have decided."

Some residents say there may be some problems for surrounding homes if dynamiting is needed, and say there is also some concern about wells possibly being polluted that may result in the drainage of surrounding wells.

But DeRemer says there is no reason to dynamite and that he would not be polluting the wells. He said he would still need permission from DER to drill for a well and if there was a need to dynamite, but said the 40 x 120 foot structure would not require much water anyway.

"What the people are really upset over is the location of the mall," said Ross Township Holcomb. "You have to understand that people who live out here do so to get away from the city, to have peace and quiet."

"I wouldn't mind one store. And the mall would probably be more convenient for the older people. But his plans were very

presentable and he did go by the book. It's really over and done with."

Holcomb was one of about 69 people who signed a petition against the mall, but many signatures reportedly did not come from people living in the vicinity. "We try to alert people within a 200 foot radius if something is going to be built," Phillips said. "But there were signatures on that petition that weren't from around that area."

Still, Holcomb said he received about 25 calls against the mall, including those from approximately five adjacent land owners.

Supervisor Bob Walsh, who voted "neutral" at an Oct. 7 supervisors' meeting, said the mall could possibly benefit the community, but said he could understand the feelings of some of the residents. Originally, many people thought DeRemer would be erecting a dry cleaning plant, but DeRemer said the surveyor had made that mistake. The land was later rezoned to a more restricted classification from B-4 to B-2 at a public meeting, according to Merolli.

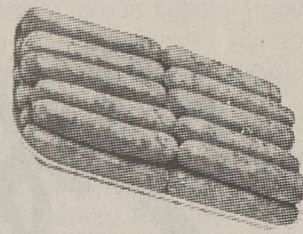
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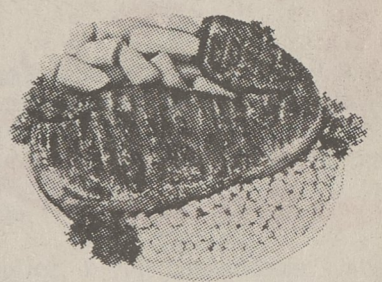
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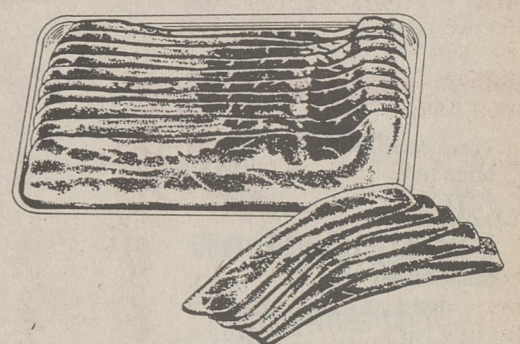
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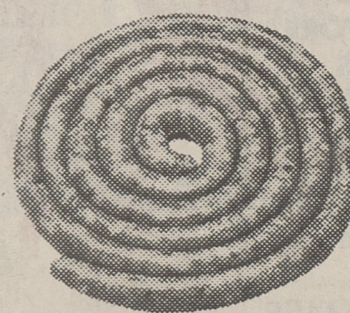
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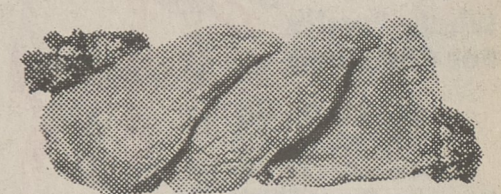
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