

# Will a SuperTarget open?

If Target's loyal customers are thrilled about the prospect of shopping at the company's first megastore in Central Ohio, they won't be so delighted about waiting for one to be built. So far, the SuperTarget idea has been a hard sell.

The development firm Casto wants to construct a SuperTarget—a regular Target plus a full-service grocery—as part of a 500,000-

square-foot shopping center in northeast Columbus at Dublin-Granville and Hamilton roads. But a neighborhood group, the Albany Park Civic Association, opposes turning 41 acres of

## Retail

farmland into a retail hub. Its concerns focus on traffic, environmental impact and design issues, as well as size—at 174,000 square feet, SuperTarget is about a third larger than a standard Target. Company representatives, city planners and residents are expected to fight over the details during the next few months. (Casto scrapped its plan to build a SuperTarget near Africa Road and Polaris Parkway in December after Westerville city planners panned the proposal.)

Industry experts say the company doesn't plan to make much money selling vegetables and pot roasts, but hopes the foodstuffs will persuade folks to visit more often. "For Kroger, groceries are their mainstay. They can't afford to discount groceries significantly," says Rao Unnava, a marketing professor at Ohio State's Fisher College of Business. "Target, on the other hand, can discount the groceries in the hopes that people will then purchase something in the soft goods."

Columbus is a crowded market for food retailers, with Wal-Mart, Meijer, Kroger, Giant Eagle, gourmet food stores and the warehouse clubs all in the mix. Retail analyst Chris Boring says the competition might benefit shoppers. Ultimately, however, it can leave the region with huge vacant buildings (think Big Bear and Cub Foods) since, as he says, "There's not room for everybody."

But Casto will need to win support from the neighborhood group and the city of Columbus before the first SuperTarget can begin to compete.

—Alice Hohl