

## Osborne Village Safeway store ready to open after 6-year struggle

Saturday, March 12th, 2005

By Martin Cash

Nearly six years after announcing its intentions to redevelop its River Avenue and Osborne Street property, Canada Safeway is finally set to open the new store on Wednesday.

At 49,000 square feet, the new outlet is 66 per cent larger than the 40-year-old former store and it is being applauded by neighbourhood supporters as a glowing example of how multi-national corporations can work with community interests.

"It's a wonderful thing to see this come together," said Asher Web, the executive director of the Osborne Village Business Improvement Zone. "The community is waiting with bated breath for the doors to open, and at one time the two sides were so far apart."

Although there were some angry words exchanged over the years and while Safeway invested more time and expense than usual in the project, company officials are satisfied with the outcome.

"It has been a challenging process, but we believe the end result meets the community needs and our operating requirements," John Graham, Safeway's Winnipeg-based public affairs manager, said in an interview yesterday.

Graham said the community wanted services that are available in suburban stores, so Safeway had to make the store bigger. But the community also wanted the development to reflect the fact there is more pedestrian traffic at that store than at most Safeway outlets, he noted. So the designers included more exterior landscaping, built a smaller parking lot and dropped plans for a gas bar on the lot.

"It's been a long process but everyone feels it has been a positive one," Graham said. "The whole exercise has been quite unique for us, but the Osborne Village neighborhood is unique. It is a special neighborhood."

The new store was built on the footprint of the old one, only bigger. Originally, Safeway wanted to orient the store 90 degrees from where it is, so that it would face east. Community groups, on the other hand, had once advocated that the company build right on River Avenue.

Two new retail developments will eventually be built along the street front -- a 6,100-square-foot store will be completed on Osborne Street over the next few weeks that will house a Manitoba Liquor Commission outlet, and another 4,300-square-foot structure will be built along River Avenue.

Safeway and the Liquor Mart have been occupying a 15,000-square-foot building on the site during the construction phase, and that building will be demolished when the new buildings are completed.

The new Safeway store will feature an expanded organic and natural foods section, a deli that will feature a take-out restaurant, a Starbucks coffee shop and an expanded floral department.

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