

Long-awaited shopping

Neighborhood has a voice in new plans

By CHAD LINGWOOD
The Coloradoan

Back in 1984, a solitary sign north of Harmony Road announced to Golden Meadows homeowners: "Coming soon, neighborhood shopping center."

Now, 13 years and a \$3 million lawsuit later, a 115,000 square-foot shopping center, anchored by a modestly sized Safeway, is slated for completion around Jan. 1.

"It's going to be a shopping center. But it's not going to be a big box with 40-foot concrete walls," Tim Dolan told his fellow neighbors during a recent meeting of

the neighborhood association.

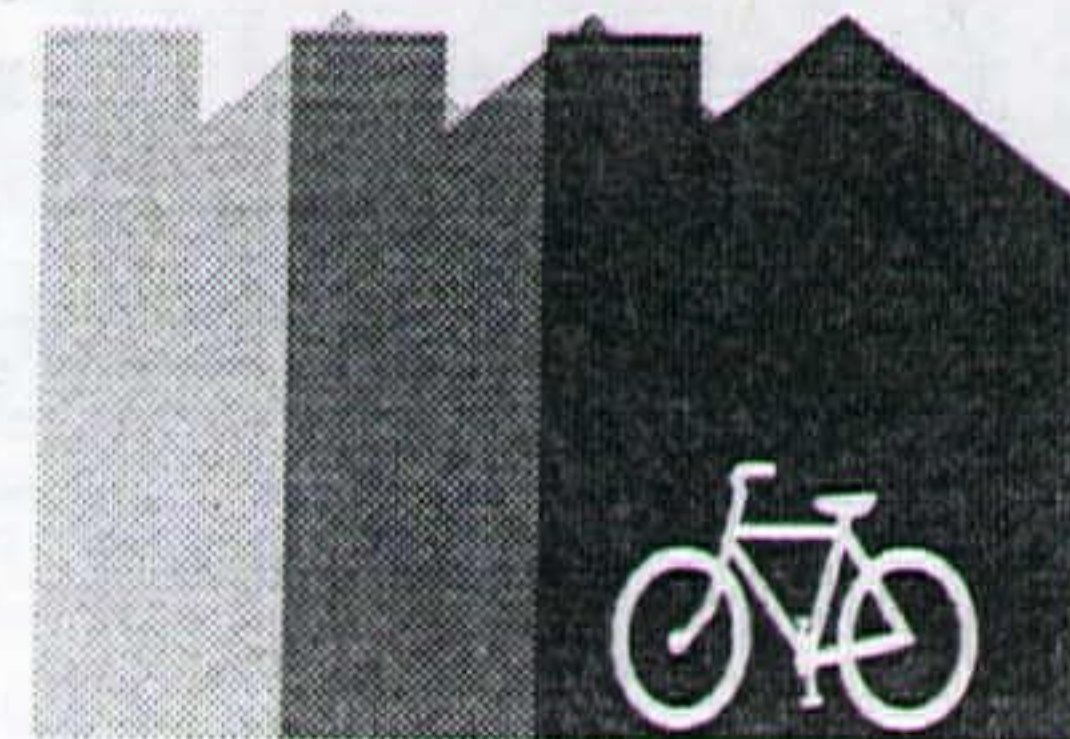
His comment reflected concerns raised in 1994 when a Denver builder tried to construct a large, 24-hour King Soopers on the same parcel.

"The developer came in with his swaggering ways and big bucks and said, 'This is what I'm going to do,'" said Val Scott, a Golden Meadows resident of more than 12 years.

The subdivision and the city of Fort Collins blocked those plans but not before the city paid the developer, Jim Sullivan, \$125,000 to settle a lawsuit — a fight referred to by residents as the "King Soopers fiasco."

Employees at Sullivan's development company said he was out of town Monday and could not be reached for comment.

"It got a lot uglier a lot faster than it needed to be," Dolan said.



Neighborhoods

"But I don't fault King Soopers at all. It was the developer himself who had a no-prisoners attitude."

So when Safeway approached neighborhood leaders about six months later, a wiser cast of residents weren't about to be taken by one of the nation's largest retailers.

"Safeway did a magnificent job. They realized that it was in their

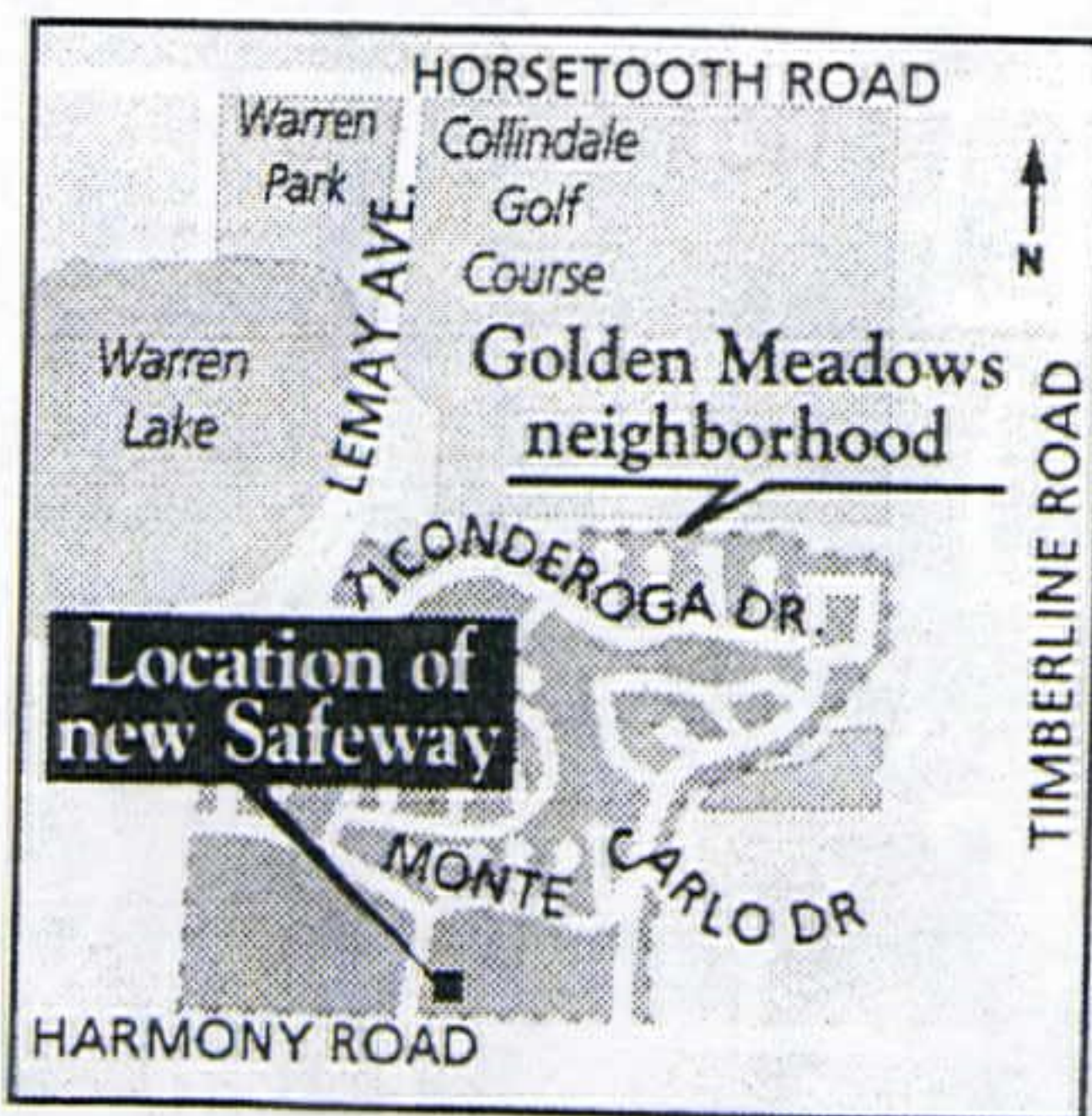
center closer to reality

best interest to meet with us," Dolan said.

Out of those meetings came an eight-lot, six-store complex, which Safeway says will be built with its neighbors to the north in mind. "We agreed to add a landscaping island to identify that as an entrance to the neighborhood and not a cut-across the supermarket," said Katy Press, a Safeway real estate manager.

The retail chain also agreed to pay for the paving of 11 "speed humps" to slow traffic in the Golden Meadows subdivision. Safeway also will landscape Monte Carlo Drive and pave traffic-slowing circles on several streets they will share with the neighborhood.

Unlike King Soopers, Safeway agreed to limit the hours and size of its store. Blueprints for the store show it to be about 49,000 square feet — about 26,000



Angela Ulm/The Coloradoan

square feet less than what King Soopers envisioned.

"We don't need the added traffic, the 24 hours of shopping. People from Cheyenne coming down to buy toilet paper," Scott said.

Press has negotiated with enclaves up and down the Front Range, and no neighborhood has been as active as Golden Mead-

ows, she said.

"They understood that this is a give-and-take process. They realized it wouldn't be a situation where they had a list of 50 demands and Safeway would meet all of them," Press said.

Construction on the project, located north of Harmony Road between Wheaton Drive and McMurray Avenue, has stalled. Building permits for the shopping center have yet to be approved. But Safeway expects customers will be strolling its produce aisle by January.

Besides being able to walk down the street for milk and eggs, Dolan said his neighbors have benefited in another way.

"It's been an education for private citizens that you can make a difference in the system," he said. "That you can literally fight City Hall."