

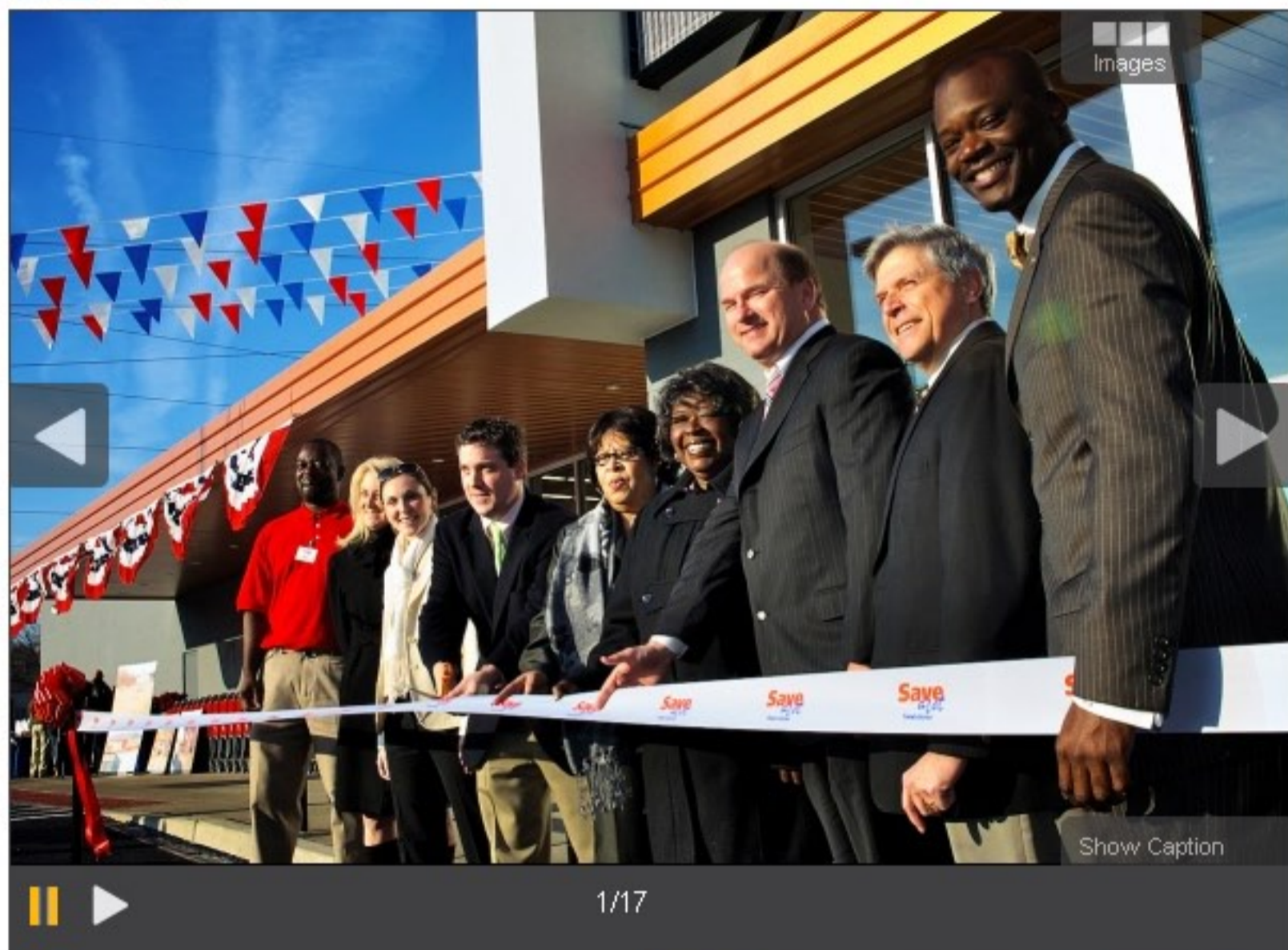
Top 5 Northwest Philadelphia development stories of 2011 -- No. 1

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In Northwest Philly's neighborhoods this year, you didn't have to shop around very far to find tasty stories about land use and development. And some of the meatiest were somehow related to grocery stores -- though despite many neighbors' fervent hopes, not a Whole Foods or a Trader Joe's among them.

This week, NewsWorks and Plan Philly will bring you five of the juiciest stories among them. Here is the first:

CHELTEN PLAZA: This year's Battle of Germantown, waged over developer Pat Burns' plans for the shopping center at the corner of Chelten and Pulaski, was an all-you-can eat buffet of neighborhood drama.

Blending issues ranging from the long and dysfunctional relationship with **outgoing Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller**, to an emerging identity crisis as Germantown begins to gentrify (or re-gentrify, depending on how long your memory goes back) to a simple desire to buy organic peppers without having to leave the neighborhood, Chelten Plaza was a pot-boiler.

Almost from the get-go, a vocal group organized to protest Burns' move to bring the Save-A-Lot and a Dollar Tree store to Chelten Plaza, saying it signaled he thinks Germantown "is a ghetto." That set the tone for much of what followed, as yellow-clad protesters spent the summer picketing the site. They also **packed a zoning board hearing**.

It also raised questions about **Council's role in development**, and what "councilmanic prerogative" really means. In the case of Chelten Plaza, it meant a bill to change a zoning overlay that prohibits variety stores -- created under Miller's tenure -- to allow the Dollar Tree.

Council rejected calls to defeat Miller's bill, and the **Save-A-Lot opened with little fanfare** on early this month. Perhaps the proof, just to finish this feast of food metaphors, is in the pudding -- the brisk business going on at the Save-A-Lot.

Coming tomorrow: 8200 Germantown Ave.

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