

Location is key in real estate

Metro Commercial exec says the area should fare well in economic decline

Special to The Times Herald

Metro Commercial President Steven H. Gartner addressed the condition of the region's retail real estate market and provided insight into what the industry can expect in 2008 at the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Pennsylvania Economic Forecast held recently in King of Prussia.

This year's event was a standing-room only crowd of more than 260 industry executives packed Maggiano's restaurant, where the luncheon seminar was held. Each year, ICSC convenes a panel of some of the industry's foremost executives to present and comment on its retail market forecast and national market overview.



Steven H. Gartner

Gartner, who is the ICSC state chair, made note of the recent turbulence in the market conditions that may lie ahead.

"In 2008, retailers will be concerned both

about the overall strength of the economy and the consumer's ability and willingness to spend," says Gartner. However, he also stressed that the Northeast Corridor, specifically from New York through the Philadelphia region into Washington, DC, was amongst the healthiest in the nation. "We have the enviable demographics of both density and relatively high income compared to the rest of the country. Most importantly, retailers historically do very well in our area. Finally, since we don't boom nor bust, our residential real estate market will hopefully weather the dip found more drastically elsewhere."

Also speaking at the ICSC seminar was Dr. Peter Linneman, professor of real estate at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and principal of Linneman Associates. Linneman also suggested that the situation for the state's retail real estate market may not be so dire. "While the economy may be impacted negatively next year by political changes, the economy right now See **REAL** on Page B8

is strong, and most companies and consumers are simply too well capitalized for a recession to be triggered by the current capital market's disarray."

With a worldwide membership of over 72,000, ICSC is the shopping center industry's leading trade association.

Members of ICSC include shopping center owners, developers, managers, marketing specialists, investors, lenders, retailers and other professionals, as well as academics and public officials.

ICSC shapes the image of the shopping center industry by communicating and interpreting industry statistics, trends, and legislative concerns to the national and local media, and provides guidance to members on dealing with the media.

