

Gwinnett's redevelopment challenges, plans highlighted at chamber forum

[Want daily summaries and Breaking News alerts?](#)

By **Curt Yeomans**
curt.yeomans@gwinnettdaily.com

Thursday, October 15, 2015
© Copyright 2015 Gwinnett Daily Post



Sugar Hill Downtown Development Authority Chairman Taylor Anderson introduces the planned topics for Partnership Gwinnett's Redevelopment Forum on Thursday at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)



Wheeler/Brand President Scott Meadows, right, introduces the retail trends panel during Partnership Gwinnett's Redevelopment Forum on Thursday at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. Sitting next to Meadows is Shumacher Group managing broker Harold Shumacher, who was one of the panelists. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)

A wrecking ball would crash through the walls of Gwinnett Place Mall if Kirk Buttle had his way.

Buttle, the senior vice president of real estate services business CBRE, suggested during a redevelopment forum hosted by Partnership Gwinnett on Thursday that the aging mall should be replaced with something different. He explained that while large malls were a big trend in the 1980s, retail patterns are changing and malls are expensive to maintain.

Buttle's comment during a panel discussion on retail trends where development around the mall was a frequent topic. He pointed to stores such as J.C. Penny leaving as an example of Gwinnett Place's struggles.

"Take it down and say, 'If this wasn't here, what could we do?'" he said. "That's what Kirk would do."

The forum focused on redevelopment projects taking place around the county. About 220 people attended the meeting, which was held at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth, which is near the mall and in the heart of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District.

As a result of the event's location, the mall and its surrounding area were used more than once in examples about what is taking place in the retail industry.

Buttle's co-panelists were not as hard on the mall as he was, but they did point out a need to address the attractiveness of the area. Shumacher Group managing broker Harold Shumacher said local leaders need to set a vision for how the area should be revitalized through redevelopment projects that will make it as appealing to businesses as it was when the mall opened.

Ackerman Retail president Leo Wiener added that officials should look at addressing the mix of businesses in the area with less emphasis on retail.

"We need to recognize that we have too much retail in this area," he said.

Gwinnett Place CID executive director Joe Allen acknowledged the mall is facing challenges when he got up to speak about the CID's ACTivate Gwinnett Place improvement plan. He added he has faith that the mall's owners, Moonbeam Capital Investments, are making strides to turn around the shopping center's fortunes.

"I think by the end of the year, some of those plans may be announced," Allen said.



Jones Lang LaSalle regional director Tim Eachus talks about public-private partnerships during his address to attendees at the Partnership Gwinnett Redevelopment Forum on Thursday at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)



Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District executive director Joe Allen, left, talks to Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District executive director Chuck Warbington during a presentation on the ACTivate Gwinnett Place plan at Partnership Gwinnett's Redevelopment Forum on Thursday at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)



Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District executive director Chuck Warbington, right, talks to Terwilliger Pappas Multifamily Partners division executive Jimmy Baugnon about plans to build new housing next to the Suwanee Town Center Partnership Gwinnett's Redevelopment Forum on Thursday

The CID director suggested the Gwinnett Place Mall area of the future could be a mixed-use development where the owners "scale back some of that excessive retail."

Allen also repeated his often-heard mantra that the CID's ACTivate Gwinnett Place plan, which calls for new public waterfront spaces, streetscaping, traffic improvements and walking trails which connect the mall to McDaniel Farm, will be a catalyst for redevelopment around the mall.

"This can be the anchor for a re-invigorated Gwinnett County," he said.

The five-hour forum did not get bogged down in discussions only on the Gwinnett Place Mall area though. A significant amount of time was devoted to presentations on redevelopment projects taking place in other parts of the county.

The capstone presentation focused on construction of the four-star Marriott hotel at the Infinite Energy Forum, as well as other plans to redevelop the space surrounding the facility.

Explore Gwinnett executive director Lisa Anders told the audience the hotel will help the facility draw conferences it currently can't compete with nearby conference spaces for conventions because of lack of a full-service hotel. Her presentation included a fly-through video showing the exterior and interior designs for the hotel.

"This is one of the biggest missing pieces," Anders said. "(Convention organizers) ask us where the hotel is and we have a lot of nice hotels in the area, but none of them are right there."

She added the biggest issue officials must address after the hotel is convention space. The facility's current size limits it to compete for only 20 percent of the convention business.

"If we double the space at that facility, we'll be able to compete for 80 percent of the business," Anders said.

She said plans to redevelop the center's parking areas into parking decks and a downtown-style entertainment district will also help the facility attract more conventions.

Many other projects outlined at the forum focused on housing for senior citizens and millennials in Gwinnett's cities.

A few developers, such as Terwilliger Pappas Multifamily Partners division executive Jimmy Baugnon, said there isn't much difference in the housing desires for the two age groups. Terwilliger Pappas Multifamily Partners is developing new high-end housing slated to be built next to Suwanee Town Center and Baugnon said it is designed to appeal to both age groups.

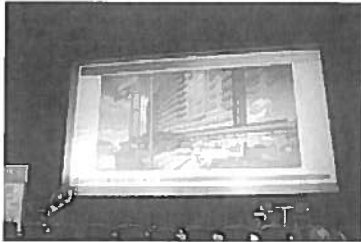
"The only difference between empty nesters and millennials is the price of the bottle of wine on the table," Baugnon said. "They want to live in the same places. They want to eat in the same places and they want to walk to the same places."

The housing projects included:

- Terwilliger Pappas Multifamily Partners' plans to build 235-unit high-density housing and retail development, with parking for 353 vehicles, in Suwanee. City officials announced the nearly \$50 million development earlier this year.
- Plans to build 325 units of millennial housing, with a parking deck and retail facing Lawrenceville Highway on a 7.7-acre site bisected by old Main Street in Lilburn.
- Long-term designs which call for the construction of 729 units of town home and condo-style housing, as well as new green space and a waterfront, on land located between Lawrenceville City Hall and the Lawrenceville Lawn. The city's economic development director, Lisa Sherman, said the beginning of construction on those units is at least two, to three years away because the city has to build a new public works building first. The current public works building is located on part of the land where the housing is slated to be built.

at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)

• Preparations to build a 239-unit upscale, urban senior housing community, with retail that faces Highway 20, near downtown Sugar Hill. The \$55 million development will include 175 independent living units, 25 assisted living units and 25 units for memory care. The developer, Solomon Development Services LLC, expects to begin construction early next year, and the facility is slated to open in 2018.



Explore Gwinnett executive director Lisa Anders shows a fly-through video of the Infinite Energy Forum's planned Marriott hotel to attendees at Partnership Gwinnett's Redevelopment Forum on Thursday at Studio Movie Grill in Duluth. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)

Sponsored From Around the Web



1 Strange Fruit That 'Destroys' Diabetes



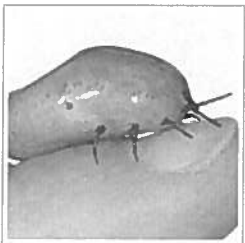
Reverse Your Hair Loss and Regrow a Full Head of Hair



Controversial "Genius Drug" Used by Rich People



Remove Your Eye Bags In Under 2 Minutes



The Root of All Stomach Problems?



LEGAL

Troubled Gwinnett Place Area: 'Man, Let's Just Start Over'

Thursday, September 17, 2015, by Josh Green



[Parking lots, be gone! Rendering: Pond, via ABC <http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/real_talk/2015/09/gwinnett-place-district-faces-sweeping-changes.html> .]

The once-thriving retail nucleus of Gwinnett County is a shell of its former self, and to "stem the retail decline" around **Gwinnett Place Mall**, as one official puts it, plans call for simply swapping out the parking lots and abandoned big boxes and putting up a *Readymade Urban Utopia!* The district has been hemorrhaging retail anchors for a decade (and soon, Fortune 500 giant **NCR Corp.** will skedaddle for Midtown, too), but there may be hope on the horizon, the Atlanta Business Chronicle reports.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/real_talk/2015/09/gwinnett-place-district-faces-sweeping-changes.html> Funding from the Atlanta Regional Commission and the National Association of Retailers is supporting a **Beltline-inspired** master plan that hopes to transform the area into a "multi-modal green corridor," replete with wondrous mixed-use development, walking and biking trails, urban-style apartments and parks. Because, in this day and age, peeling the roof off **Macy's** just doesn't cut the mustard.

- DULUTH
- WINNETT
- DYING OLD MALLS
- WINNETT PLACE CID
- WINNETT PLACE MALL
- SLOW DEATH OF MALLS