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## County begins work on Asian Galleria redevelopment

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Hip Sing Asso dancers perform a Vietnamese and Chinese dragon dance to ward off evil spirits at the Asian Galleria groundbreaking Wednesday in Duluth. The 42.5 acres located on Pleasant Hill Road near Satellite Boulevard is being redeveloped into a retail community featuring a supermarket, restaurants, clothing stores and more. The Asian Galleria "is part of a dream, plan, and preparation for an even better Gwinnett Place," said Joe Allen, executive director of Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District.

DULUTH - Say goodbye to the dormant buildings and say hello to the Asian Galleria. Gwinnett Prado's face-lift has begun.

As hundreds from the Asian community gathered Wednesday, county officials and other local business leaders from Gwinnett Place officially began the transformation of what was once a Target, Sports Authority and a Sears store. With many buildings empty at 2200 Pleasant Hill Road for years now, the new 431,000-square-foot Asian Galleria retail-condo redevelopment should be completed next year.

"This puts a new face on this property," said Board of Commissioners Chairman Charles Bannister. "The economic impact this facility will have on the county will be quite valuable."

Bannister estimated the assessed value of the facility is \$60 million and joked how he's quite pleased with the tax dollars it will bring in. He estimated that the redeveloped complex will also create 300 jobs. Dong Fang International Supermarket is already slated to be one of the tenants. Other future occupants will consist of a Dong Fang restaurant, an apparel mart, a designer furniture store and a bank and financial center. Bally Fitness and Office Max are already tenants. Bannister also welcomed the Asian community's desire to work in Gwinnett and the professionalism they bring.

"We're the most diverse county in the state, and we welcome you," he said.

Commissioner Lorraine Green had similar sentiments.

"This is a historic day for the CID (community improvement district) and District 1," she said. "This is one of the best changes we've seen yet."

Co-chairman of the Asian Centre Development, Wai Pang, said in Chinese through a translator that he wanted to create a center of attention for the entire Asian community - Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese and Koreans.

The other co-chairman, Ly Phillips, reiterated this thought in Vietnamese, again through a translator.

"After the renovation, this will be a great shopping center," she said.

Once the ribbons had been cut, the Hip Sing Association from Atlanta performed a traditional lion dance. One member of the group, Louisiana resident Michael Bergeron, said the purpose of the dance was to chase the evil spirits away prior to beginning construction.