

## RETAIL RENAISSANCE

## DEKALB RETAIL

## Redevelopments thronging Scott Boulevard corridor

BY MARTIN SINDERMAN  
Contributing Writer

Three new redevelopment projects in a densely populated, inside Interstate 285 area of DeKalb County promise to play a big part in shaking things up in a well-located corridor that has been largely underserved by retailers.

Running along Scott Boulevard from its intersection with North Decatur Road northeast to and including North DeKalb Mall, this corridor is located in the heart of DeKalb County. The highly urbanized area includes the main campus of DeKalb Medical Center; the headquarters of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; downtown Decatur; affluent Druid Hills and a number of other walkable neighborhoods; Emory University; the 140,000-square-foot DeKalb Farmers Market; and Patel Plaza, a 65,000-square-foot shopping center.

Retailing in and around the corridor is well served by existing transportation infrastructure, so there's little retail vacancy. "You can get off I-285 and take Lawrenceville Highway, a high-traffic thoroughfare [which eventually becomes Scott Boulevard] west right into Decatur,"



North DeKalb Mall redevelopment may include a mix of uses.

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said **Mike Neal**, senior vice president of **Colliers International Atlanta**.

Several big-name developers are bringing more projects to the Scott Boulevard corridor. At its west end, **Selig Enterprises Inc.** is redeveloping Suburban Plaza, one of Atlanta's first suburban shopping centers, at the southeast corner of the North Decatur Road and Scott Boulevard intersection.

The redevelopment, slated for completion during first quarter 2016, includes increasing the size of the center by 38,806 square feet, to 329,060 square feet, said **Bill Stogner**, Selig Enterprises senior vice president. Tenants will include a 150,000-square-foot Walmart and a 35,000-square-foot LA Fitness, he said, accompanied by about 60,000 square feet of junior anchors, as well as additional

new restaurant and shop space.

On nearby property long-occupied by Scott Boulevard Baptist Church at North Decatur and Scott, Atlanta-based **Fuqua Development** has the mixed-use "Decatur Crossing," the first phase of which will incorporate 60,000 square feet of retail by Fuqua with 298 luxury apartments and townhomes by Charlotte, N.C.-based Northwood Ravin. Demolition of the church and site preparation work are underway; construction is slated to begin in early 2015.

About two miles northeast, **Lennar Commercial Investors LLC**, **Sterling Organization** and **Hendon Properties** are in the early stages of redeveloping the 622,300-square-foot North DeKalb Mall. Located just inside I-285 at the southwest corner of the North Druid Hills Road and Lawrenceville Highway intersection, the enclosed mall, which opened in 1965, is anchored by Macy's, Burlington Coat Factory, AMC Theatres, Ross and Marshalls. Lennar and Sterling acquired it from Hendon for an undisclosed price earlier this year.

"We think this is a fantastic long-term redevelopment opportunity," said Lennar Commercial Regional President and co-founder **Mike Cohn**.

## GWINNETT PLACE FUTURE

## Groups growing new downtown for Gwinnett

BY MARTIN SINDERMAN  
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Efforts to transform the area around Gwinnett Place regional mall into a mixed-use "new downtown" for Gwinnett County are ramping up into high gear.

Located off the Interstate 85/Pleasant Hill Road interchange, Gwinnett Place Mall originally opened in 1984, during the "gold rush" years of commercial real estate in Gwinnett, when the county perennially placed first on "fastest-growing" lists.

Developed by Atlanta mall-building icon Scott Hudgens and weighing in at about 1.3 million square feet, Gwinnett Place Mall kicked off such an onslaught of commercial development that the mall and its surroundings were dubbed collectively as the "economic epicenter" of Gwinnett.

Nothing is forever. The mall and vicinity flourished during the 1980s and early 1990s. But in the 2000s, competition from the newer and bigger Mall of Georgia, along with a general shift in population growth to the northeastern part of Gwinnett, resulted in the mall suffering increasing vacancies, declining sales, and in 2012, foreclosure.

For the past several years, the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District (GPCID), which encompasses properties surrounding the I-85/Pleasant Hill



The new master plan for the Gwinnett Place district includes more green and public spaces, community improvement district leaders say.

interchange, has been working hard to revitalize this area.

According to GPCID's mission statement, the organization's major goals include improved traffic flow; better pedestrian access; and the creation of a distinctive Gwinnett Place community, with a common look throughout.

Means to achieving these goals include consistent landscaping, pedestrian-friendly street design, streetscaping and signage, pocket parks, public plazas, benches and plenty of green space.

As part of bringing this vision closer to reality, the GPCID recently selected Norcross-based **Pond & Co.** to prepare a "Gwinnett Place Multi-Modal Green Corridor Master Plan."

Building upon a previous **Atlanta Regional Commission** Livable Centers Initiative study completed in 2012, this



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master plan will include recommendations for turning the core of GPCID area into a transportation-centered activity hub marked by extensive green space, as well as a network of bike and pedestrian traffic enhancements. It is slated for delivery in May.

The ultimate goal is to create an attractive environment for more new urbanism style, mixed-use, live-work-play development in the Gwinnett Place Mall area, enabling it to once again become a central feature of the county.

"This master plan will allow us to pull together a lot of ideas, and show us how to use them to create a downtown for Gwinnett County -- which is something we really haven't ever had," said **Joe Allen**, GPCID executive director.

As part of the planning process, GPCID has also retained **Bleakly Advisory Group**

**Inc.** to analyze the issues it faces in implementing its vision for the area and to create a work plan to guide those efforts.

The firm's recent demographic analysis of the Gwinnett Place Mall area found the majority of its 47,000 workers are either Generation X or millennials with jobs in finance, insurance, management, professional services and retail. In addition, they are predominately well-educated, and make more than \$40,000 annually.

The Gwinnett Place area "does not have enough mixed-use or residential properties to sustain the number of people who could potentially move to the area," group President Ken Bleakly reported. "This is a major opportunity for future development in the area."

GPCID has Bleakly's group interviewing owners and owner representatives of large, strategically located commercial properties in the CID about their plans for the future and their willingness to participate in redeveloping them along more mixed-use and/or residential lines.

One big piece of the redo of this area is, of course, Gwinnett Place Mall itself.

"In the near future, we feel confident that we can once again be a destination for not just shopping, but also for entertainment and other uses," said **Shaw Pryor**, senior vice president of **Moonbeam Capital Investments LLC**, which purchased Gwinnett Place Mall last year.