

SCT

SHOPPING CENTERS TODAY

Week



Atlanta mall finds anchor — in S. Korea

The 2005 **Federated Department Stores-May Co.** merger continues to spawn creative use of anchor spaces in many U.S. malls. **Gwinnett Place**, in the Atlanta suburb of Duluth, has found one such use in the form of South Korea's **Megamart**, which operates 12 department stores in its home country and three in China. Megamart aims to open its first U.S. store in Gwinnett Place's former **Macy's** space next year. "There has been an incredible influx in the Korean and Asian communities in Duluth and Suwanee," said Atlanta developer George Thorndyke,



who bought, along with several partners, the three-level, 240,000-square-foot Macy's and 15 surrounding acres for \$6 million about the time of the Federated-May union. "But Megamart also wants to get Americans to shop there. Even though it will have an Asian theme, it will be an American-Asian department store." The idea is to blend elements of East and West in what Thorndyke describes as the first upscale multicultural department store of its kind. Customers will find an Asian grocery store with multiple tasting stations on the first floor, stores on the second floor, and an event hall and an Asian-themed food court on the third floor.

Thorndyke, who traveled to South Korea to tour Megamart stores before negotiating a lease with the retailer, says an essential component of the plan is to make sure that Asian and non-Asian customers alike feel at home. Signs and labels will be written in Korean and English. Megamart's decision to open such a large test store in the U.S. is a significant milestone for South Korean retail, says Michael Penalosa, a managing principal of Thomas Consultants, a Vancouver, British Columbia-based retailing consulting firm. "If you were to look at the newest Lotte or newest Shinsegae projects, the interiors are unbelievable," Penalosa said. "The quality of the finishes and interior design surpasses those of any American department store."