



PROGRESS: Gwinnett Place Mall redevelopment leads a trio of major county-run economic development projects

[By Curt Yeomans curt.yeomans@gwinnettdaily.com](mailto:curt.yeomans@gwinnettdaily.com)

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Gwinnett Place Mall is seen in this aerial image provided by Gwinnett County government. The mall is set to undergo a major redevelopment in the next few years.

Photo: Gwinnett County



This rendering shows the central park for the proposed 'Global Villages' redevelopment of the Gwinnett Place Mall property. This rendering shows the cultural center for the proposed 'Global Villages' redevelopment of the Gwinnett Place Mall property.

Photo: Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District

It is not just the private sector and Gwinnett's cities that are undertaking new big projects in the county.

The county's government leaders are involved in some significant economic development projects that will grab headlines for years to come. The most high profile of those is the redevelopment of Gwinnett Place Mall, but the county's economic development team also has gateway development projects at the OFS property in unincorporated Norcross and at the former Olympic Tennis Center property on U.S. Highway 78 near Snellville.

"Gwinnett Place Mall has been a lot more public and that's the one where a lot of movement is happening right now," Gwinnett County Economic Development Director Roman Dakare said.

The Gwinnett Place Mall redevelopment is a project that business and elected government leaders often point to as one of the biggest projects looming on the horizon in Gwinnett.

The mall was a major shopping destination when it opened in 1984, but it had gone into a sharp decline in recent years. County leaders closed on a purchase of most of the mall property — sans the Macy's, Beauty Master, Mega Mart and former Sear's anchors — in 2021.

An equitable redevelopment plan and a revitalization strategy were developed and presented last year to help guide the redevelopment of the property.

Most of the existing mall building is slated to be torn down, with only the Macy's, Beauty Master and Mega Mart anchors remaining. In its place will be a "global villages" redevelopment created through a public-private partnership.

Renderings of what the property could become include a central green space; a cultural community center; retail spaces; dining options; office space; multi—family uses; job and small business support; and other community services.

"(The Gwinnett Place Revitalization Strategy) calls for a mixture of uses," Dakare said. "I called for seven different 'villages' with approximately 2,600 to 3,500 multifamily surrounding a major park in the middle of the development where we can get Gwinnett residents to come and live, work and play and kind of create the next project that engages our community the same way that Gwinnett Place Mall has for the past several decades."

Dakare said the next step for the Gwinnett Place project is to combine the equitable redevelopment plan and the revitalization strategy into a single vision for the property.

As far as the gateway projects are concerned, those are not nearly as far along at this point as Gwinnett Place Mall's redevelopment is.

"They're located in very strategic locations in the county and we really want to make sure we get these projects right," Dakare said. "So, we're taking our time and looking at all available options to us."

Most of the OFS property was purchased by the county in 2018, although OFS did keep some of the property.

Since then, the Gateway85 Gwinnett Community Improvement District has moved its offices to the property. The site has also continued to be used by film studios to shoot scenes for major motion pictures, such as “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.”

But, the OFS site, like the Gwinnett Place Mall property is expected to include a transit component. Whereas the county is currently seeking federal grant money to help pay for a major expansion of the existing transit center at Gwinnett Place Mall, the OFS property has been viewed as a possible site for a major stop on a bus rapid transit line that the county is studying and would also connect to Gwinnett Place.

“Transit is always a part of the conversation in any of our projects that we’re working on,” Dakare said.

Meanwhile, the redevelopment of the former Olympic Tennis Center site off U.S. 78 at West Park Place is another redevelopment project that has been in the works for several years now. The county acquired the property in a land swap with the Stone Mountain Memorial Association six years ago, and the tennis center has since been torn down and the property returned to a green field.

Fuqua Development, which is working on the Exchange at Gwinnett in the Buford area, is working on a plan for the redevelopment of the site.

“With everything, the way that these major redevelopment projects, it’s hard for me to give you timeline, but I do want to emphasize it’s one of our top priorities and we’re engaged on working on these projects,” Dakare said.