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jallen@gwinnettplacecid.com  
(mailto:jallen@gwinnettplacecid.com)  
(678) 924-8171

# With Strategy Finalized, Gwinnett County Begins Hard Work Of Creating A Legacy Development For Community

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Late in February, after an 18-month process involving thousands of conversations with local residents and an extensive economic feasibility study, the five-member Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners (<https://www.bisnow.com/tags/gwinnett-county-board-of-commissioners>) unanimously adopted a revitalization strategy for Gwinnett Place Mall (<https://www.bisnow.com/tags/gwinnett-place-mall>).

Once the Gwinnett Place Mall Site Revitalization Strategy is fully realized, the site, now a mostly vacant eyesore, will be reborn as a vibrant mixed-use development and significant economic engine for fast-growing Gwinnett County, which is about 30 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta.

But despite the landmark vote, no champagne corks are being popped — at least not yet. As people close to the Gwinnett Place Mall Site Revitalization Strategy (<http://comm21-main.s3.amazonaws.com/GPCID/Global%20Villages%20Implementation%20Strategy>) admit, the heavy lifting now begins on bringing the ambitious Global Villages concept to life.

“I feel like now we're at the starting line in a marathon and we just heard the starting gun go off,” said Gwinnett County Commissioner Kirkland Carden (<https://www.bisnow.com/tags/kirkland-carden>), a longtime proponent of redevelopment whose district includes the mall area.

After the unanimous vote, the board requested that county staff complete a 100-day action plan that Carden said is crucial to set the stage for the years-long process of redevelopment. One of the action items of the plan is to hire an engineering and construction management team to oversee the work.

Other important steps in the first 100 days will include deciding whether to hire a master developer to oversee all new development on the site or to break it into parcels to be handled by multiple developers. Also, a strategy must begin to take shape for demolishing unwanted buildings on the mall site.

Carden said the demolition work will be “very tricky” because the site includes multiple parcels, many of them adjacent, owned by different entities that intend to stay on-site. Also on the site are a handful of major retailers such as Macy’s that want to be part of the redevelopment. The county will enter into extensive negotiations with property owners to resolve these issues.

And that is just the first 100 days. Carden said the actual redevelopment work will take years or even decades to complete before the Global Villages plan is reality.

“The site is not shovel-ready,” Carden said. “There are a lot of things the county has to do on the front end in the coming years, such as improvements to water, sewer, streets and other infrastructure, to get to a place where the private sector can come in and rock and roll.”

But while it will be some time before the site is abuzz with earthmovers and construction cranes, the Global Villages strategy has received positive feedback from the private sector, Carden said, adding that some developers are already close to committing to new development in the area around the planned Global Villages site.

The Global Villages plan envisions as many as 3,800 new residential units, 50K SF of office space, 55K SF of new retail, a 50K SF cultural center and nearly 13 acres of parkland in the place of the old mall. But right now, all that is far in the future.

“A lot of work will be happening behind the scenes for a couple of years before people see the construction of the Villages even begin,” said Joe Allen (<https://www.bisnow.com/tags/joe-allen>), executive director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, which oversaw the development of the revitalization strategy.

For now, Carden said what is important is that the board has put its stamp of approval on the strategy, finally setting the many wheels of redevelopment into motion.

“What we didn't have prior to that board vote was a clear direction for county staff to follow,” he said. “Now, they clearly know where we're at with this plan for the next 20 years to guide the redevelopment of this area.”

Like the revitalization strategy, Carden himself is thinking long-term. His first job as a teenager was at an Abercrombie & Fitch store at Gwinnett Place, and like many locals, he spent many hours at the mall as a youngster. Now a father, he said he wants the Global Villages to have the same meaning to his young son as the mall did to him, even if the site's look and uses are different.

“The vacant mall is an eyesore and hurts the perception of Gwinnett County,” Carden said. “As a resident, I want this to become a place where my son can create his own memories, get a job and play in the green space. I want to create a legacy for my family so that Global Villages is as important to them as the mall was to me.”

*This article was produced in collaboration between Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District (<https://gwinnettplacecid.com/>) and Studio B. Bisnow news staff was not involved in the production of this content.*

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*Contact John Krukowski at [john.krukowski@bisnow.com](mailto:john.krukowski@bisnow.com) (<mailto:john.krukowski@bisnow.com>)*

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