

# Reclaim Gwinnett Place Mall

## Community Event 1: Feedback Summary

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On September 10<sup>th</sup>, Gwinnett County hosted the first Community Open House for the Reclaim, Reconnect, Reimagine, and Revive Gwinnett Place Mall project at the Gwinnett Place Mall parking lot. The event was attended by over 100 residents and local businesses who shared their experiences and vision for an equitable Gwinnett Place Mall. The event had five interactive stations facilitated by County staff that covered specific topics related to the planning process. We heard key themes across each station.



### *If you were the owner of Gwinnett Place Mall, what would you do with it?*

We heard different ideas for Gwinnett Place Mall from event participants that covered a range of topics including new community space, affordable housing, job training, and improved transportation. Some of the ideas we heard include:

- Create a transit center that builds greater access and connection to the region which can include a MARTA expansion, light rails, and bike lanes
- Dedicate a large part of the area for open space with a park, garden, and space for community use such as picnics and outdoor concerts
- Think beyond traditional mixed-use development and support existing businesses
- Ensure the stores cater to all socio-economic levels

- Create a one-stop-shop for county services such as food stamps, etc. that makes community resources more accessible
- Buyout current anchors and build a new building to support community education
- Build a mixed-use space with affordable housing, businesses, entertainment, and hotels
- Make a food court with only small, local businesses from different cultures and cuisines
- Establish a community space for children and young people to have fun, explore, and create in an immersive environment, which can include an arts space, gallery, theater, sports complex, or observatory.
- Create a space within the Mall to celebrate Gwinnett County's diverse communities and learn about the County's history
- Build a health and wellness complex that includes a community medical clinic and walking track

*"I'd like a human development center. There is tremendous cultural diversity in Duluth, and a place to learn languages, dances, and even professional training would be very enriching. It would also be interesting to have things for people, like diverse food courts that allow small businesses to thrive and people to learn more about cultures and cuisines." – Event Participant*

*"In order to be effective in repurposing the mall in a way to support the community, the current anchors need to be bought out. A blank slate would allow the project to be more effective. I think education is a great equalizer, if we can repurpose the mall to support education it would help the community as a whole." – Event Participant*

*"Mixed-use with only local restaurants, no chains. I want part of the mall to be a place where small food businesses can set up shop and people can come experience different foods from the diverse cultures of Gwinnett" – Event Participant*

### ***How can the Plan build on community assets and community needs?***

County staff asked event participants to identify the community assets in their community. We intentionally defined assets broadly, ranging from local stores, churches, community centers, or a general sense of pride so that residents could speak to parts of their community that they value. We heard the following community assets:

- Existing businesses and property owners in the area
- The Mall's location and proximity to I-85
- The County's diversity
- Local restaurants that represent different cultures and cuisines
- MegaMart
- Local churches

We also asked participants to identify needs for their community. We defined needs as the gap between what is and what should be. A need can be felt by an individual, a group, or an entire community. Event participants noted the following needs:

- Green space that is connected with bike trails, light rail connections
- Jobs and an incubator to support small businesses
- Affordable mixed-use housing
- Nightlife
- Beautification
- Outside concert venue

- Performance art space
- Supermarkets and more healthy food options
- Attractions and jobs that keep young people here after they graduate
- Free classes for kids, teens, and adults
- Community spaces that bring people to get together
- Public transportation and multi-modal transit center
- Emergency preparedness hub

### ***Have you visited Gwinnett Place Mall before? What was your experience?***

Many event participants visited the mall prior to its decline – people visited Gwinnett Place Mall to go shopping, spend time with friends and family, and participate in different programs (e.g. adult education classes, theater). A number of visitors shared they briefly worked at the Mall as well. Some event participants continue to visit the Mall to shop at the remaining stores or were vaccinated at the vaccination site.

*“I have grown up with Gwinnett Place Mall. It has been hard to see the mall decline. I spent a lot of time with my family and friends here and want to have it be a destination for family and friends again.” – Event Participant*

### ***Consider how your or your neighbors' identity like your ethnicity, race, gender, age, where you come from, etc. impact day-to-day life.***

We heard from event participants a desire for an equitable future for Gwinnett County, where all are welcomed and able to participate in decision-making.

*“I can't imagine how single parents can afford to live in Gwinnett, pay for before and/or after school care, and transport my children to extracurricular activities without any family in town. My race has the most impact in my everyday experience. Our community is significantly different than it was years ago and unfortunately blacks and other minority groups never had a seat at the table to make decisions about their community. I see in my neighborhood that many white families are leaving/selling their homes.” – Event Participant*

*“Equity is doing whatever needs to be done to welcome all folks to the table. Placemaking is more than just a physical location. It's making a place for folks at the table who desire one.” – Event Participant*

For many, Gwinnett Place Mall can be an integral part of this future vision, where the Mall will be inclusive of all people.

*“I would like to see Gwinnett Place Mall be a fair place for everyone in Gwinnett County. I do not want this area to only look like it is for people with money. Retail and housing should be equally for all people.” – Event Participant*

*“Equity to me means getting everyone to the same level. There has always been disparity between groups of people, and I am excited to see what the future plan is for Gwinnett Place Mall. We must rebrand this place to be more inclusive and create a place that is an inspiration to future County projects.” – Event Participant*

### ***Do you have additional questions or comments? What do you want to learn more about?***

Event participants shared the following questions, which will be answered over the coming weeks.

- Is there a budget limitation?
- Will small businesses in the community have a chance to be involved in the development?
- What will the responsibilities and expectations of the developers/redevelopers be?
- Are those involved looking at other mall areas where these projects have been done?
- What is the projected timeline? When will a decision be made?
- Will small to local businesses be supported?
- How will you connect with and reach regular people? More people need to be aware of the redevelopment of the mall.
- How will the County pick the developer?