

“Most cities have at least one ‘ghost mall’, a once thriving enclosed mall turned boarded up eyesore”

– New Urban News

Winter Park Village

Winter Park, FL

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Area: Approximately 38 acres
 Client: The City of Winter Park
 Don Casto Organization
 Year Designed: 1997

For more information, visit doverkohl.com.



The “Dead Mall” in 1997



Phase 1 replaced the single-story mall with multi-story, mixed-use buildings that line an interconnected grid of pedestrian-friendly streets created from parking lot aisles and drive lanes.



Phase 1 redevelopment

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Makeovers bring new life to old malls

Retail relies and their prime land transform into villages

By Hess El Nasser
 USA TODAY

WINTER PARK, Fla. — One by one, shops and restaurants in the Winter Park Mall shored up their fate. The 2,000-space parking lot emptied. The old Dillard's department store struggled to stay afloat in a 38-acre sea of concrete.

"It went from bad to worse says local resident Rita Lowndes. "Just dreadful."

It's not as dreadful anymore. The mall is gone, but it owes and her friends are banking at a new venue on the same spot — one of the many midsize cities at Winter Park Village. There are streets, sidewalks and storefronts. A 28-screen movie theater anchors one end, a Borders bookstore and cafe another. The old Dillard's has turned into The Loft, industrial-like apartments and offices with exposed pipes and concrete floors.

Glimmers in the 1960s and 1970s, old malls and shopping centers are dying. But rather than mourn, many urban experts are rejoicing.

Old malls are coming back to life as Main Street-style neighborhoods. In old suburbs and downtowns from Denver and St. Paul to Tucson and Chattanooga, developers are recycling malls and turning them into open-air urban villages.

The demise of malls and shopping centers is an opportunity for cities and towns to revive themselves. For developers, it's a rare chance to get their hands on big chunks of land in urban areas where vacant real estate is scarce. And for those fighting sprawl, it's a way to protect rural areas by building on land that's already developed and is close to existing roads and main transit.

But no one is more gleeful than a growing contingent of urban thinkers who promote reuniting the village centers of old. They're pushing the development of old-fashioned neighborhoods where people can live, work and play within walking distance — or at least near public transportation.

"When you're talking about a 30-acre site, you can basically build an entire neighborhood there," says Steven Bodin, communications director for the Congress for the New Urbanism in San Francisco, a group that works to create neighborhoods where walking is encouraged.

Strategic locations

Old malls take up acres of prime space in areas near freeway exit ramps, major streets, bus lines and even subway stops in some places. More important, they're in the city or close to it. At a time when many people are fed up with long commutes and crave new housing close to work, restaurants and abandoned regional malls, strip malls and shopping centers are looking golden.

"Obsolete malls are getting a new lease on life," says former Indianapolis mayor William Hudnut, now a senior fellow at the Urban Land Institute. "It's an untapped market."

People are discovering it in St. Paul. Plaza Center was built when the extension of a major highway was planned nearby. The road was never built and the strip center faded. The city bought and demolished it, turned most of the parking lot into a lake and is building housing, offices and stores around it.

"It's the Joni Mitchell song in reverse," says Chuck Ripke, head of the local neighborhood planning council. "We took the parking lot and turned it back to paradise."

Lakewood, Colo. Ten minutes from downtown Denver, the city of Lakewood and private developers demolished the Villa Italia Mall and are creating a downtown in a city that never had one. The \$500 million Belmar project has a public plaza at the center and 19 city blocks of parks, shops, theaters, offices, a hotel and 1,300 residences.

Winter Park Village

Rebuilt: Susan Hagan, left; Tim Matthews, middle; and Rita Lowndes have built last month in West in Winter Park Village.

Winter Park

Map showing the location of Winter Park Village in Florida, near the Gulf of Mexico.

The Project

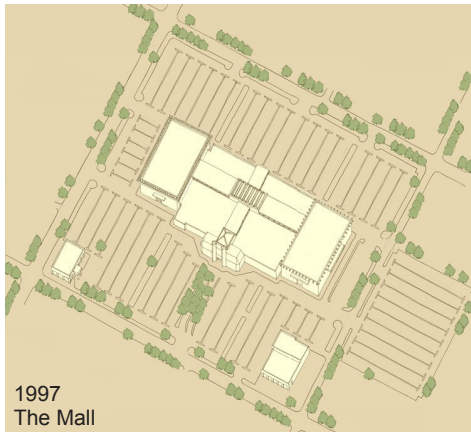
Winter Park Mall, located in the heart of Winter Park, Florida, was hailed in the 1960s as a symbol of progress. The Mall was designed to compete directly for customers with nearby Park Avenue, the City's traditional Main Street. During the 1980s and early 1990s, however, Winter Park Mall steadily declined in sales and lost tenants, while Park Avenue maintained its vitality and grew stronger. Park Avenue is now known as "the Main Street that killed the Mall."

In 1997, a consultant team from Dover, Kohl & Partners, Glattig Jackson, et al., and Gibbs Planning Group devised a plan for the redevelopment of the Mall. Created on the City's behalf, this plan was worked out in consultation with the prospective developer.

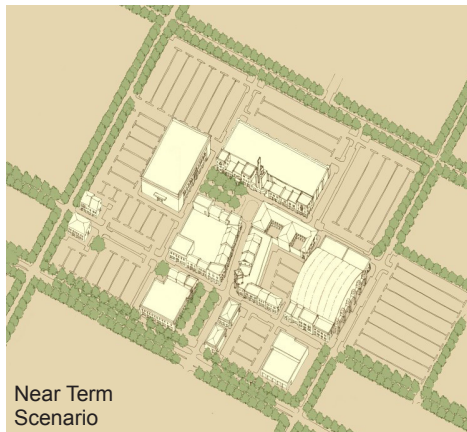
Status

Winter Park Village was featured in the April 23, 2003 edition of USA Today, entitled "Makeovers Bring Life to New Malls." Winter Park Village was one of the early mall redevelopments that have since been occurring across the country.

Bringing New Life to a Dead Mall



1997
The Mall



Near Term
Scenario



Long Term
Prospects



The Dead Mall

Winter Park Mall was a vintage example of 1960's single-use retail planning. Its low-slung, mostly one-story structure was set in the midst of a huge unbroken expanse of asphalt. Its stores faced inward, presenting blank walls to the public realm. An urgent objective during redevelopment was to establish an urban sense of place; the interior of the development in the near-term scenario was designed to function like a normal part of an urban village.

Shaping Public Space

Even though it is focused in only a small area in the near-term scenario, the plan established coherent, legibly shaped public space between the buildings. The fronts of buildings were deliberately placed in certain locations to generate a sense of spatial enclosure. This sense of shaped public space is a constant feature of successful urban villages.

Fronts and Backs

In the plan, care was given to create a "public side" and a "private side" to each building site, wherever possible. This is because, in the real world, buildings do have fronts and backs. The fronts are for things like doors and storefronts; the backs are for loading and mechanical rooms and dumpsters and, where appropriate, mid-block parking courts. The front side is the presentation face of the building, so it should face the streets! It sounds simple, but this principle is often ignored.

Interconnected Street Network

The plan showed how to reweave the circulation pattern originally intended for this area of the city. An interconnected network of streets and rationally shaped blocks is now being built. The new streets that divide the parking lots and mall site into blocks are detailed as "real street-like streets." This means they are constructed with sidewalks, street trees, on-street parking and curbs, with urban cross-sections, and their intersections have pedestrian-friendly, small corner radii. Practically speaking, some of these streets will function like drive aisles in parking lots during the near-term phase, but their urban appearance will have a traffic calming effect and will make infill proposals possible.