

Oviedo Mall Macy's could be torn down for apartments and hotel



Oviedo Mall deputy general manager Kevin Hipes in front of the former Macy's store, which could be torn down. (Photo by Austin Fuller)

BY AUSTIN FULLER

Oviedo Mall is heading toward a significant turning point as a developer hopes to tear down the empty Macy's department store and build hundreds of apartments and a hotel.

The proposal could bring people back to the shopping center, which, like many American malls, has suffered through the departures of major retailers.

“In today’s world, if you’re not in a super-regional location or an entertainment, touristy location, you can’t have a million square feet of retail anymore, unless you’re a super-regional mall,” said Kevin Hipes, the mall’s deputy general manager. “This is not a super-regional mall. So this mall’s failing. It’s been failing. The only way to fix a mall like this ... [is] you have to change it to mixed-use.”

The project, which needs city approval, would include 250 multifamily units, 175 age-restricted units and 124 hotel rooms on nearly 15.5 acres, documents show.

Macy’s [closed in 2017](#) and developer Marc Hagle [acquired the property](#) in 2018, records show. The mall itself is under different ownership.

“The Macy’s will be [demolished] and that will create enough room to really reconfigure the whole thing,” Hipes said. “It will look like a typical apartment complex.”

Oviedo Mall’s [Sears anchor](#) also closed this year, but different kinds of tenants have moved into other storefronts inside the mall. They include [coworking space NeoWare](#) and District Eat and Play — home to arcade games, escape rooms, a bar and a restaurant.

Oviedo is not the only Central Florida city that could see this kind of development come to a mall property. Developer Chuck Whittall [purchased the land underneath Orlando Fashion Square](#) and will be partnering with Daryl Carter in hopes of redeveloping that center, including [with apartments and a hotel](#).

As the number of department store anchors decreases, entertainment and office uses are moving into those spaces while multifamily residential developments at malls have increased in recent years, said Justin Greider, senior vice president and Florida retail lead at JLL, a real estate and investment management professional services firm.

“Mall projects are centrally located in high traffic areas,” Greider said. “Generally they are very desirable places to live.”

Greider added malls offer a lot of amenities for potential residents, such as restaurants, movie theaters and other entertainment options.

Residential projects bring people back to mall sites and help keep them as relevant centers in their communities, Greider said.

Hipes noted another benefit: “It’s going to be hard to get more restaurants until you get more people. The apartments will help that,” he said.

He sees the Oviedo project as an important step for the mall.

“It doesn’t fix it, per se, by itself, but it’s the first step in an absolutely necessary evolution to getting it fixed,” Hipes said.

Customers at the mall had mixed reactions to the proposal.

“We’ve already got [too much] traffic,” said Pat Lancaster, an 81-year-old Winter Springs resident who was eating lunch at the mall.

But Hipes countered the mall “was built for density and traffic.”

“It will easily handle all that traffic because retail generates more traffic than residential,” he said.

Tonya Tolson, a 58-year-old life coach who lives in Oviedo, saw positives in the proposal after watching “Last Christmas” with her neighbor at the mall’s Regal theater.

“It will bring more life and it will be multi-generational, too, which, I think, we need,” she said.

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