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### City Center goes green

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With yesterday's announcement of City Center's imminent demise, all hopes of retrofitting a casino or an indoor ski resort were dashed. But Mayor Mike Coleman finally may be able to get his grocery shopping done in peace.

Since the city strong-armed the ill-fated City Center out of TL-Columbus's hands back in 2007, everybody has been asking about the future of Downtown development's elephant in the room. Everyone had an idea—and adrenaline junkies were the most vocal. Coleman said he couldn't go anywhere—"I couldn't even make it through a grocery store"—without someone asking him to turn City Center into a casino. "I can't build something that's illegal," the mayor said he told his inquisitive neighbors.



When it came to redeveloping the nine-acre site, the city's proposal doesn't look like much of a gamble.

City Center isn't even old enough to drink, yet construction of the once-thriving 20-year-old mall is now considered all kinds of misguided for the way it discouraged shoppers to step foot outside of its walls. Frequently referred to by the mayor as "a bunker," the city says the mall will be demolished. It's shameful shell will be replaced by park, perhaps one day to be surrounded by residential development. That part of the plan is still a bit fuzzy, and a ways down the road.

The way city leaders were talking about it at Wednesday's press conference, however, you'd think they were presenting something much more exciting than a field of grass.

With its cumbersome walls and roof demolished, the new Columbus Commons presumably will be filled with Statehouse sunbathers and strolling young professionals, a veritable downtown gathering place of the future—much like City Center itself once was (save the sunbathers).

Columbus Commons—the name just *begs* for corporate sponsorship, doesn't it?—"will be the most important Downtown development project for the next generation of residents," Coleman said.

As Capital South's Guy Worley introduced the high profile partners, and as reporters were briefed about the city's public-private plans to demolish City Center as early as this summer, a slideshow of fancy projects played in the background.

But Columbus isn't going to see fountains, lights and brick-and-mortar-type projects—past work of Easton developers The Georgetown Company and Arena District planners MSI Design—at the site of City Center any time soon.

The mayor said he has requested \$20 million in federal funding for demolition of City Center.

If the money is not granted, those involved aren't specific about Plan B, offering the equivalent of winks and nudges to indicate they've lined up corporate donors who are good for the money.

"I'll say this," the mayor said, "this stimulus money is the best and first option."

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