



Columbus Commons Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q. So City Center mall is becoming a park named Columbus Commons?

A. Upon redevelopment, Columbus Commons will initially reopen as a nine-acre green space. The actual demolition of City Center will begin in the summer of 2009, followed by construction of the park, all taking place within 12-14 months. Columbus Commons will therefore likely open to the public by fall 2010. In the following 5-10 years, market-driven, mixed-use redevelopment is anticipated. Expected projects include multi-story buildings with residential units above street-level retail, office buildings and entertainment venues, anchored by a permanent green space.

Q. What experts did you work with on this plan?

A. Capitol South worked with The Georgetown Company as its development manager and MSI Design as its land use planner in order to create this plan. As the project progresses, we will employ additional engineers, architects, demolition and construction teams.

The Georgetown Company is a privately-held diversified real estate company whose principals have developed, owned and overseen more than 20-million square feet of office, residential, retail and recreational projects, including the 1,300-acre Easton development, The Lazarus Building renovation in Columbus, as well as the IAC Building and Bryant Park in New York.

MSI Design is a world-class urban planning and landscape architecture firm. They were the master planner behind the Arena District, North Bank Park and are the designer of the upcoming Scioto Mile riverfront park. They also were involved in the creating the Master Plan for Universal Studios and have done extensive work for Disney World in Orlando.

Q. How did you come up with this idea?

A. First, we had to understand the complexities to the site, so we put together a world-class team, led by The Georgetown Company and MSI Design. We also talked with both local and national experts about what was physically possible, realistic and the best use for the site.

While we had doubts about whether the existing structure could be adapted for other uses, we felt a responsibility to leave no stone unturned. Our goals were to avoid excess costs and examine all possibilities for reuse of the building before considering demolition.

We talked to CBRE, the world's largest retail broker, and the consensus was that the era of the downtown mall had passed in Columbus. We also talked with major employers in our area, with the thought of making a deal to transform the current structure into an office environment; however, the expense to reconfigure the mall was cost prohibitive. Residential developers also felt there was a strong possibility for success on this site, but not using the current structure.

After looking at the site from many different perspectives, we found that attempting to reconfigure the current structure was vastly more expensive than simply starting over.

Additionally, we heard similar sentiments from the community. At Capitol South, our challenge was to separate fantasy from reality, and reveal common themes among the many ideas published online, on television, in magazines, newspapers, spoken at public meetings, etc.

Among those common themes were green space, pedestrian friendly, a sense of openness, and a place to have fun again – a clean slate followed by mixed-use development.

After an extensive analysis, this one solution was superior, not just in terms of matching the community's wants and needs, but also in being the most realistic and achievable.

Q. Why is it named Columbus Commons?

A. As a public 'commons', it will be a shared, open space for the entire city to enjoy.

Q. How much funding is needed?

A. The initial phase is expected to cost approximately \$15-20 million, and includes the demolition of the current structure as well as the creation of 9-acres of green space. In the future, we anticipate additional private investment to exceed \$100 million.

Q. How is this being funded?

A. This will be a public/private partnership. Capitol South is committed to the success of this project, and plans to pursue a variety of funding sources, from private to local, state and federal. While we are not prepared to discuss specifics, we are confident in our ability to deliver on expectations.

One avenue we can share is that we're applying for federal stimulus funds. Columbus Commons is green, jobs producing and most importantly, shovel ready. It has long been one of central Ohio's top priorities for revitalization, and we can begin work within 90 days.

By investing in basic infrastructure and green space on an existing site downtown, this project will help combat urban sprawl, while improving quality of life and transportation efficiency. Over time, private investment will greatly surpass the initial public investment and economic impact.

Q. Is this part of the city's bicentennial plan?

A. Redeveloping the City Center site was a key strategy highlighted in the 2012 Bicentennial Plan. The committee felt that this site was crucial to continuing the momentum downtown and could serve as a catalyst for creating a strong retail corridor along High Street. A solution for City Center (Columbus Commons) was also in the 2002 Downtown Business Plan, with the goal of reinventing Downtown Columbus within ten years.

Columbus Commons will join recent successes including the construction of more than 5,000 new apartment and condos, the Scioto Mile riverfront promenade and park, the Huntington Park baseball stadium, two new parking garages, the Grange Insurance Audubon center, and the award winning Lazarus Building, the largest green renovation in our nation.

Q. What is happening to the parking garages?

A. An existing 900-space garage will be preserved underground in addition to the 3,600-space garage to the south, to be renamed the Columbus Commons parking garage. Parking is a key economic development tool and is vital in attracting and retaining employers.

Q. How will this affect current City Center tenants?

A. In order to proceed, we must demolish the mall. In order to do that, we must vacate any remaining tenants. There are currently only eight tenants remaining out of the more than 100 that were originally onsite when the mall first opened in 1989. Seven out of the eight tenants have a 5-day or less termination notice, with one having a 30-day notice. Each lease makes it clear that notice may be given at any time. We have elected to keep the mall open for 30 days in order to allow tenants to make other arrangements. There are multiple spaces available for rent in the immediate vicinity of the mall. We hope these tenants will relocate into these spaces and continue to be part of the downtown community.

Q. How will this affect central Ohio as a whole?

A. There are no great cities without great downtowns, parks, recreation, and cultural amenities. Regardless of where you live, whether in the suburbs or elsewhere, our collective identity is tied to the appearance of Downtown Columbus. This is one *important* piece of that puzzle, joining the many other projects led by Capitol South, CDDC and the City such as Scioto Mile, the Lazarus renovation, new parking garages, etc.

For more information, please visit www.downtowncolumbus.com

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