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Bye bye, Buckingham

Demolition begins on mall

By J.C. O'Connell
The Aurora Sentinel

Aurora | After the cheering, clapping and kudos came the destruction.

Buckingham Square Mall's demolition party got under way Tuesday, Jan. 8, as a crowd of excited neighbors and city leaders watched Mayor Ed Tauer use a bright yellow excavator to tear down part of the old Meryvn's marquee.

"Today, we're really not tearing something down, we're starting to build something new," Tauer said. "And whenever you build something new it's not one person that does it, it's a whole community that does it."

Developer Miller Weingarten worked with the city and neighbors during the past year to create a detailed redevelopment plan for the old Buckingham site.

By 2009, residents could be shopping at a newly created mixed-use outdoor mall called The Gardens on Havana.

"Aurora's always known for growing and now we get to be known for re-growing," said Councilwoman Molly Markert, who represents the area and once called the nearly empty mall "a pimple."

Plans for The Gardens will include "big-box" stores such as Home Depot and PetSmart, as well as smaller stores and about 270 residential units.

"We're very confident that this project is going to be strengthening the surrounding area and providing the neighbors with some new amenities as well as new neighbors," said Clark Walker, the project's development manager for Miller Weingarten.

The redevelopment is expected to cost \$110 million.

In September, the city, Arapahoe County and the Cherry Creek School District tentatively agreed to a proposal that would allow up to \$12 million of taxpayer money to go to the project. The city plans to contribute about \$7 million of the total sum.

Demolition could be finished in March, with construction beginning in April, Walker said.



Mayor Ed Tauer watches the old Meryvn's marquee being torn down Jan. 8 during the demolition ceremony of the Buckingham Square Mall. (Photo by Heather A. Longway-Burke/The Aurora Sentinel)



Charles Hack, videographer for Aurora 8, and Yasmine Marino, volunteer reporter with Aurora 8, cover the demolition ceremony of the Buckingham Square Mall on Jan. 8. (Photo by Heather A. Longway-Burke/The Aurora Sentinel)

MORE COVERAGE

Be sure to read the next Home or Weekend edition of The Aurora Sentinel for expanded coverage of the beginning of demolition on Buckingham Square Mall.

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Arnie Schultz, president of Neighborhood Organizations Along Havana, watched construction workers pull down large parts of Buckingham before the demolition ceremony.

"It's not so much about it coming down and the old thing being gone, but it's about the new," said Schultz. "It's good."

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