

Alton mayor optimistic for future of Alton Square Mall despite recent closures

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - With the recent closures of longtime tenants of the Alton Square Mall, the Hallmark store and Things Remembered, many Alton residents are worried about the mall's future.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker said the closures are not good things, adding several people who have worked at both for many years are now without jobs. When asked about the overall future of the Alton Square Mall, however, Walker was more optimistic. He said the Hull Group, which owns several distressed malls across the country, was planning on investing as much as \$20 million into the structure to completely revamp it.

"We are seeing a massive retail contraction in this country," Walker said. "Soon, we will see the start of a new redevelopment in the mall."

Some of that redevelopment will include the demolition of Macy's, whose property was purchased by the Hull Group from Macy's just before the store announced its closure. That demolition will allow for 14 acres of redevelopment facing toward Homer Adams Parkway.

"Work should start this summer," Walker aid. "The Hull Group is investing \$10-\$20 million. It is all their money they are investing, and they only need TIF to protect some of their investment."

The portion of the Alton Square Mall facing Alby will also be redesigned, which will give the building a more appealing face directed at another highly-trafficked road. Walker said he was optimistic, because the Hull Group rehabs distressed malls across the country, and has experience and research behind their decisions.

Inside the mall, the entire upstairs will be redesigned, and the potential of a movie theater in the future is also not out of the question. Any smaller shops on the upper floor will be moved into the lower floor, so the upper floor can be used for three or four anchor stores.