



-Staff photo by Jeff Harrison

The west end of the Del Crest Shopping Center is being remodeled for a new Save-A-Lot grocery store. The project includes raising the roof by 60 feet to accommodate the store. Work briefly stopped due to issues with the existing building. City Manager Mark Edwards said work resumed after crews ordered new steel supports.

# Del City ripe with redevelopment

By Jeff Harrison  
Managing Editor

For many cities, economic growth means attracting businesses to undeveloped parts of town.

But it requires a little more creativity in Del City.

City leaders have been working with developers and property owners to reestablish commercial corridors and grow the sales tax base. Those efforts have included everything from bulldozing a derelict apartment complex to offering sales tax incentives to rehab shopping centers.

“We’re landlocked, we cannot expand out,” said City Manager Mark Edwards. “Our only other option is to work with property owners and rehab or rebuild structures.”

The largest project on the city’s plate is the redevelopment of 20 acres near Scott Street and I-40. The city acquired and later bulldozed a old apartment complex. This summer, the city used eminent domain to purchase a nearby gas station and the former Fantasy Island strip club. The city plans to remove the structures and sell the land to a Texas developer.

Del City spent about \$2.2 million for land acquisition, legal fees and demolition. Edwards expects the city will recoup the expenses with the land sale.

“All the zoning is in place, it will be up to the Hunt En-

terprises to develop it,” Edwards said. “They don’t have any retailers lined up yet. We just want sales tax-generating businesses.”

Less than two miles down the interstate, Peter Piper Pizza is preparing to move into a new retail center on Vickie Drive. Sooner Investment LLC rebuilt the shopping center, which includes Harbor Freight, Gold’s Gym, and a new Family Dollar store. Del City assisted in removing an old gas station at the corner of Vickie and Tinker Diagonal.

Save-A-Lot is opening a grocery store in the Del Crest Shopping Center, near Sunnyslane Rd. and SE 15th Street. Del City is providing up to \$400,000 in sales tax incentives to remodel the existing building. The extensive renovation includes raising the roof by 60 feet.

“That will put a new emphasis on retail in the area and hopefully draw more tenants,” Edwards said.

On the southwest side of town, a property owner is working with the city to rehab a shopping center at the intersection of SE 44th Street and Bryant Avenue. Del City will provide up to \$30,000 in sales tax rebates to upgrade the sidewalk and curbs on the property.

While the city is an active participant in several projects, Edwards said they use extreme caution when offering public assistance.

“There needs to be a give and take,” he said. “We’ll work with businesses, but we won’t get fleeced by them.”

**“We’re landlocked, we cannot expand out.”**

- Mark Edwards, City Manager of Del City

## Mall:

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which may not be the best fit for its long-term survivability,” he said. “A good tenant mix is vital to HPM’s future and a comprehensive market study will help meet this objective.”

That is actually easier said than done, the economic development director said. Many malls across the country have been demolished; some, like Crossroads Mall in Oklahoma City, is a shadow of its former self. Still others, like Shepard Mall, have been repurposed.

“City staff has brainstormed different ways to makeover HPM, but there are no obvious answers given the circumstances,” Coleman said. “The formula to redevelop the property will likely consist of a variety of mixed uses - Town & Country Center is doing well on the opposite side of N Air Depot Blvd. and we feel the site may still support some retail business, but certainly not at the level of when it opened nearly 38 years ago.

“What we have to keep in mind is not just how the area has changed superficially, but also shoppers have changed - including the explosion of online purchasing,” Coleman said. “Studies indicated about 1,200 malls were still operating primarily for retail use last year across the United States; that compares to thousands of them that thrived in the mall heyday, in the early 1980s.”

No matter which company takes the reins on the market study, city officials believe the most important thing is to move forward - in a way that can help once again become an asset to the community, Coleman said. The project is an important step in accomplishing that.

“This mall was once so important to Midwest City and it’s a shame that it has fallen down as it has,” he said. “We do believe there’s something we can do to bring back Heritage Park Mall in a way that will be a benefit to everyone.”